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An Exploration of How Closely Upper Elementary Magnet School Reading Teachers' Perceptions of Evidence-based Practices in Reading Compared to Actual Practices in Their Classrooms

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AN EXPLORATION OF HOW CLOSELY UPPER ELEMENTARY MAGNET SCHOOL READING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES IN READING COMPARED TO ACTUAL PRACTICES IN THEIR CLASSROOMS

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We shouldn't teach great books, we should teach a love of reading."—B.F. Skinner (1904-1990) was an American psychologist, behaviorist, author, inventor, and social philosopher.

I dedicate this work to God in all of His glory. He put this burning desire in my heart over 30 years ago and it has just now come to fruition. *"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* (Jeremiah 29:11) Thank you for teaching me numerous lessons over the course of completing this document.

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"At one magic instant in your early childhood, the page of a book—that string of confused, alien ciphers—shivered into meaning. Words spoke to you, gave up their secrets; at that moment whole universes opened. You became irrevocably, a reader."—Alberto Manguel (1948-) is an Argentine-born Canadian anthologist, translator, essayist, novelist, and editor.

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"The best moments in reading are when you come across something - a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things - which you had thought special and particular to you. And now, here it is, set down by someone else, a person you have never met, someone even who is long dead. And it is as if a hand has come out, and taken yours"-- Alan Bennett (1934-) is an English playwright, screenwriter, actor, and author.

ABSTRACT

"There is no such thing as a child who hates to read; there are only children who have not found the right book."—Frank Serafini (1945-) is an award winning children's author and illustrator and an Associate Professor of Literacy Education & Children's Literature at Arizona State University.

The purpose of this study was to explore how closely upper elementary magnet school reading teachers' perceptions of evidenced-based practices in reading compared to actual practices in their classrooms. Literacy instruction, beginning in the third grade, places more emphasis on comprehension and higher expectations on the students than in the early elementary grades. There has been little research conducted on how teacher beliefs about reading and their actual instructional practices affect reading scores on national tests. Perhaps in the understanding of teachers' beliefs about evidenced-based practices and the actual instructional practices used in the classroom can help in the development of instructional practices that help both teachers and students to read for pleasure and enjoyment with an added bonus of information learning on the side. The surveying of teachers' perceptions of evidence-based practices in reading relative to their actual practices in the classroom should lead to a better understanding of how evident the use of evidence-based practices in reading classrooms are to others.

Three teachers were chosen from the upper elementary grades, one per grade. The central focus of the study was the classroom observations during reading instruction, interviews with the three classroom teachers, instructional coordinator interview, and a reading survey. Detailed information about teachers' perceptions of evidence-based practices and their actual practices in the classroom and how they were interrelated was discussed.

CHAPTER 1

"The greatest gift is a passion for reading. It is cheap. It consoles, it distracts, it gives you knowledge of the world and experience of a wide kind. It is a moral illumination."-- Elizabeth Hardwick (1916 – 2007) was an American literary critic, novelist, and short story writer.

Background of Study

Nationwide, in third through fifth grades, students are struggling with low achievement scores in reading and a lack of reading motivation. Researchers indicate that the perceptions and beliefs of teachers and ineffective instructional practices might affect these outcomes (Henk & Melnick, 1995; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). Motivated readers want to read, willingly participate in reading activities, and arrange opportunities to read both in and out of school (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996; Wigfield, 1994, 1997a, 1997b). Students with positive approaches towards reading, read regularly and have greater achievement scores than students with negative approaches towards reading (Greaney, 1980; Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; Walberg & Tsai, 1985). Students who believe they are very skilled in reading are also more likely to read for pleasure and to experience higher scores on reading achievement tests than students who perceive themselves as struggling with reading (Henk & Melnick, 1992). As they progress through elementary school, research indicates that students often become less inclined to read, and they tend to have a rather unfavorable view of reading (McKenna, et al., 1995; Wigfield, 1997a, 1997b).

Definition of Evidence-Based Practices in Reading Instruction

Today, in the 21st century, there is no one instructional program, approach, and/or method that has been found to be effective in teaching all students to read. Evidence-

based best practices that focus on promoting high achievement scores have been well documented and are now the preference of teachers and administrators alike. According to Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni (2011), "An evidence-based best practice refers to an instructional practice with a record of success that is both trustworthy and valid" (p. 17). The International Reading Association (2002a, 2002b) indicates that in addition to being trustworthy and valid, when this practice is used in the classroom, the students can be expected to make gains in reading achievement.

The International Reading Association (2002b) states, "… that to be a reliable and trustworthy practice, the evidence must provide:

- Objective data that would be identified and interpreted similarly by an evaluator.
- Valid data that adequately represents the tasks that children need to accomplish to be successful readers.
- Reliable data that would remain essentially unchanged if collected on a different day or by a different person.
- Systematic data that were collected according to a rigorous design.
- Referred data that have been approved for publication by a panel of independent reviewers." (p. 2)

Allington (2005), has indicated that teachers should be using "professional wisdom integrated with the best available empirical evidence," (p. 16) when deciding what instruction to use with their students. Bogden & Bilken (1992) have urged that when evaluating best practices, what must be determined is whether the data was research

based, rigorous, and systematic. It appears from the literature, that it is the compilation of a variety of studies, using different research designs and methodologies, that finally allows for an approach/practice to be included in the category of "Evidence-based Practices."

Teachers as Effective Agents

With the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) emphasizing the need for students graduating with the skills they need to become productive members of society, teachers must be able to adapt the instructional practices, material, and learning environments to particular situations and students. Teachers are now pulling resources from a variety of places instead of buying into one prepackaged program which usually lacks adaptability. Teachers with positive attitudes towards reading and towards their ability to teach reading may be more skillful in using educational practices that inspire students to want to learn. Clark and Peterson (1986) indicate that teachers who exhibit genuine and confident attitudes towards reading demonstrate this in classroom instruction. Other research supporting these findings has shown that teachers' distinctive philosophies and opinions influence how they teach literacy and what they see as important in the reading process to students (Allington, 1991; Lehman, Freeman, & Allen, 1994; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991). Teachers who appear more confident in their reading instructional practices, also appear to use more recommended instructional practices than teachers who are less secure with their reading positions (Morrison, Jacobs, & Swinyard, 1999). If a teacher enjoys reading for pleasure, then that teacher may provide a more intense reading experience for students, such as reading aloud to students, providing an extensive classroom library, providing more time for

independent reading, and sharing his/her ideas about a variety of different books from a variety of genres. This teacher is ultimately hoping to instill a love of reading in the students, and by doing so increase the students' motivation to read.

What has become clear throughout literature, is that outstanding classrooms are led by teachers who inspire individual students in ways that cannot be found in just any one program, method, or practice. The key component to raising achievement scores, using a multitude of different instructional strategies, and motivating students to want to read is the teacher (Pressley, 2007; Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block & Morrow, 2001). According to Taylor, Peterson, Clark, and Walpole (2000), effective teachers attend ongoing professional development and share with others the newest research-based practices. Allington and Johnston (2002) indicate that instead of telling students what they have to do to become better readers, effective teachers use discussion and inquiry to guide students in constructing meaning from text. Effective teachers use higher level questions (according to Bloom's Taxonomy) and expect higher level responses to text in whole groups, small groups, and with individual students (Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007). Also these same effective teachers provide a plethora of books from a variety of genres in order to encourage students to be lifelong learners (Hiebert & Martin, 2009).

It is obvious that a classroom can have all the materials needed and students willing to learn, but unless that teacher is actively engaged in providing these students with the evidence-based practices that fit in relevant, meaningful ways for her classroom, then these students might not be motivated to read and thus might not perform as well on achievement tests than students taught by an effective reading teacher.

Ten Evidence-based Practices for Reading

Gambrell et al. (2011) have comprised a list of ten evidence-based practices for comprehensive literacy instruction that are generally accepted by experts in the field of literacy instruction. Each practice will be more fully discussed in Chapter 2.

1. Create a classroom that fosters motivation to read. Teachers should provide a print-rich environment, opportunities for choice, and opportunities to interact with others in pairs and small groups. From an early age, students have to be guided through the reading process in order to reach their full potential as a reader as they grow older (Gambrell, 2009).
2. Teach reading for the everyday uses of reading: pleasure, gain knowledge, and to help in performing a task. Students must see the necessity of reading in order to carry out the most basic of skills as important in order to increase their complexity of reading. Reading must occur just like it does in the everyday lives of people as opposed to reading only for the sake of learning (Purcell-Gates, 2002). Literacy should be authentic and include reading not just to answer questions, but for how to put something together or make something, how to critique a book, the pros and cons of an issue, etc. Reading should include how it is used every day in any workplace.
3. Teach and review all of the components of reading all of the time: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Begin with modeling the skill, have students practice the skill with important feedback from the teacher, and finally have students work independently using all of the components.

4. Allow time for students to read their own self-selected books. Hiebert and Martin (2009) believe that opportunity to read is a critical component of the reading curriculum. Students need to read personal preferences, not just teacher-led material, and teachers need to assist students in selecting suitable material for their reading range and interests. Stanovich (1986a) has found a direct link between the amount of time spent reading and an increase in vocabulary and comprehension.
5. Provide students with a wide variety of literature and genres. According to Cervetti, Jaynes, and Hiebert (2009),

> ….evidence is mounting that experiences with nonfiction texts can be most powerful when they are related to and situated within content area instruction that has the potential to build students' skills with, and extend their conceptual understandings of, several different genres of text" (pp. 92-93).

6. Link concepts, expand vocabulary, and build on prior knowledge using multiple texts. Teachers are taught to always activate prior knowledge of a concept and link it to new information in order for students to better understand the text being read. Using a variety of texts promotes concept and vocabulary development as6 well as critical thinking.
7. Emphasize community and collaboration for learning. Effective teachers facilitate learning through collaborative and student-centered lines of inquiry instead of individualized, competitive, or teacher-led structures. Students need assistance throughout their school history in developing the interpersonal skills required for effective collaborative learning.

8. Balance teacher-led activities and discussions with student-led activities and discussions. Discussions that question the author's point of view should be allowed and led by both teachers and students. These discussions allow for a sharing of ideas and an enhancement of prior knowledge (Almasi, 1995; Kucan & Beck, 2003). Reading other books about the same topic can also promote active discussions (Evans, 2002).
9. Use technologies that expand and link concepts. Students are now in an age when the knowledge of technology is a necessity. Teachers need to acknowledge this and they themselves become familiar with "new technologies" so as to broaden their student's enhancement of reading.
10. Differentiate instruction and use a variety of relevant assessments. At this point in the United States, teaching in all major subject areas is data driven. Schools are directed to show yearly growth; principals must meet the demands of district, state, and federal requirements, and teachers must meet the needs of providing literacy instruction for every student at every level. Just using one state-mandated test to mark the progress of a student does not provide the necessary information about the daily growth of a student. Teachers must now rely on formal assessments, informal assessments, observations, summative assessments, and portfolios in order to track a student's progress. Gone are the days of the "one size fits all" instruction. This only results in some students not being challenged, others falling behind, and still others falling between the cracks.

Reading in Upper Elementary Grades (3-5)

Allington (2002) and McKenna et al. (1995) have indicated that a large number of students in third through fifth grades struggle with reading instruction, low reading achievement scores, and declining motivation to read. It is at these grade levels that instruction places a greater emphasis on comprehension. Instruction is based on reading for information and less on reading for pleasure. In many states, fourth grade is the defining elementary year because high stakes testing begins in this grade. Expectations are higher for these students, with more difficult reading textbooks containing complex vocabulary and abstract concepts to comprehend (Allington, 2002; Chall, 1983; Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990). Teachers at this point are not teaching students how to read but, rather, how to gather information and analyze it, interpret, and respond critically to what they read. Students are asked to discuss, debate, and defend their own ideas. Grosso de Leon (2002) found that upper elementary school teachers believe that teaching students to read, such as phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary instruction and fluency, is an area of expertise for teachers in the lower grades (K-2). However, the National Center for Education Statistics indicated that the results of the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) revealed that 33% of fourth graders scored Below Basic on the test indicating the continued need for teaching the basic skills in the upper elementary grades (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Perhaps if students were able to read more for pleasure in the classrooms, then a growth might be seen in the attitudes and motivation of students to read.

Magnet Schools

In 1965, the parents of seven African-American children commenced a suit against the school board of a parish in Louisiana seeking desegregation of the public schools. The United States later intervened as a plaintiff. In 1973, the district court ordered the school board to implement a desegregation plan; a plan was developed and took effect. In 1976, the school board filed a motion to have the school system declared unitary, which would have warranted the dismissal of the original suit; however, the United States opposed the motion. In 1977, the district court ruled that the school board had fully complied with the 1973 court-ordered desegregation plan, declared the school system to be unitary, and dismissed the suit against the school board. The United States, then filed a motion to amend the judgment, which suspended the finality of the judgment pending decision on the motion. In 1980, the district court gave notice that unless the plaintiffs' attorneys objected, the United States, as plantiff-intervenor, would represent the interests of the private plaintiffs. The district court did not receive any objections. The United States and the school board then entered into negotiations which resulted in the, what is now known as, 1981 Consent Decree.

In the 1981 Consent Decree, the district court determined that the plan for the school system would create a unitary school system for the parish. The decree called for the establishment of magnet schools- three elementary schools and one middle school. The decree also detailed the projected racial enrollment for each magnet school and how the projection would be achieved, which was around a 50/50 ratio. Enrollment at each magnet school was to be on a parish-wide basis, and students were to be assigned to the magnet schools based on the following priorities stated in the decree: 1) qualified siblings

of students who attend the magnet school; 2) qualified African-American students who would otherwise attend a school with over 90% African-American student enrollment; and 3) qualified white students who would otherwise attend a school with over 65% white student enrollment. This led to a testing program, where, in order to attend a magnet school, with each school having its own cut-off point, an applicant must attain that score in order to be put on the list for that school. This also led to separate test-ranking lists for white and African-American applicants. Magnet programs were to begin with the 1982-1983 school year. Each school had three years in which to meet the projected enrollment. A school enrollment was deemed to have been met if the actual enrollment in the school was within +/- 15 percentage points of the projection for such school. Upon meeting the projected enrollments for all magnet schools, the Decree would be terminated and the United States would not be entitled to seek any further or additional remedy. In 1987, the school board filed a Notice of Compliance with the 1981 Consent Decree, and the district court ruled that the school system had achieved unitary status.

In 2005, a reverse discrimination suit was filed against this same school board by the parents of a white applicant who was denied admission to the middle school magnet because his achievement test score was not high enough for a white student applicant, although it was high enough for an African-American student applicant. The school board admitted that its policy did employ racial classifications in order to meet a particular racial balance. The United States Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit found that a race-based student assignment was unconstitutional and in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. The school board was ordered to develop a new plan that would still seek

racial unity, but would provide other means of determining this other than a test score (*Cavalier ex rel. Cavalier v. Caddo Parish School Board* 2005). As of 2013, the school board uses test scores and socio-economic factors to determine placement on one list for each school. Socio-economic factors include qualification for Medicaid, qualification for Louisiana CHIPS program (medical), living in subsidized (Section 8) housing, use of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (Food Stamps), any other brothers or sisters of the applicant that receive free or reduced school lunch, currently enrolled in Head Start, and an income chart based on family size and income less than $37,630. Also the number of magnet schools has increased due to demand to five elementary schools, one middle school with another middle school having a magnet component, one elementary/middle school, and one high school with the other high schools having magnet components. To date there has been no research in the area of reading and magnet schools.

The Specific Elementary Magnet School

Northwest Parish has approximately 250,000 citizens of which 47% are African-American, 48% are White, 2% are two or more races, and 3% are Hispanic/Latino.The mission of the Northwest Parish School System (pseudonym), as stated in the student handbook, “is to improve the academic achievement of students and overall district effectiveness. We have high expectations for everyone—students, teachers, administrators, parents, community volunteers and support groups” (Northwest Parish School System, 2010, p. 2). As part of the public school system, River City Elementary Magnet (pseudonym) must comply with all of the rules and regulations set forth by the national, state, and local governments. It is comprised of 455 students of which 327 are Caucasian, 87 Black, 10 Hispanic, 28 Asian, and 3 Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

Approximately 15% of the student population receives free and/or reduced lunch. In the upper grades, there are 69 fifth graders, 75 fourth graders, and 74 third graders. All applicants are administered standardized tests; kindergarten is administered individually and first through fifth grades is administered as a group. For River City Elementary Magnet, the cut-off score for consideration is the 75th percentile. First preference is given to siblings of enrolled students. Admissions for the remaining seats are made as follows:

- First, 60% of the seats are filled based upon ranked admissions test scores, without regard to race and without consideration of race.
- Then, in order to achieve diversity. 40% of the seats are filled from a pool of applicants who meet the criteria for admission to the magnet school and who meet any of the socio-economic designations discussed above under the section Magnet Schools. This admission is made without regard to race and without consideration of race.
- If seats are still available, applicants are placed according to their ranked admissions test scores, without regard to race and without consideration of race.

When admissions are made based upon ranked admissions test scores, only on ranking list of all applicants is used.

River City Elementary Magnet participates in the standardized testing required by the state and all of the accountability practices that are required of all public schools in the state of Louisiana. The Integrated Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (iLEAP) is administered in the third and fifth grade and aligns with Louisiana's content standards, benchmarks, grade level expectations, and Common Core State Standards in

Science and Social Studies. The iLEAP combines a norm-referenced test, which compares a student's test results to the performance of students in a national sample, with a criterion-referenced test, which reports student results in terms of the state's achievement levels. Students are graded along the achievement levels of Unsatisfactory, Approaching Basic, Basic, Mastery, and Advanced. The Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) is administered each year to fourth graders. The same areas are tested and the same placement levels are used. Third through fifth grades are also administered the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers test (PARCC) in Mathematics and English Language Arts/Literacy. These test are computer-based, and use interactive questions to determine whether students have mastered the fundamentals, as well as higher-order skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and analyzing sources to write arguments and informational essays – skills not easily assessed by traditional multiple-choice tests.

For the 2013-2014 school year, River City Elementary Magnet was ranked eighth in the state for elementary schools using the third and fifth grade iLEAP scores for ELA and Mathematics combined and fourth in the parish with 98.4% of students at or above grade level. Starting with the 2012-2013 school year, the Louisiana Department of Education improved and simplified the way schools are graded by aligning with higher standards, rewarding the gains schools have already made, and focusing on students below grade level through a new bonus system. Schools earn 100 points or an 'A' every time a student achieves a desired outcome like scoring Basic, graduating with a diploma, etc. Though some outcomes generate more points and some less, if every student scored the minimum desired outcome, the school would earn a score of 100, an A grade. The

2014 Annual Letter Grade (New System) for River City was an “A”. The 2013 Letter Grade based on Growth SPS (School Performance Score) was an “A”. On the 2014 LEAP Criterion-Referenced Test (Grade 4), 100% of the students scored Basic or above in English Language Arts and 99% of the students scored Basic or above in Math. The same results were obtained on the iLEAP for grades 3 and 5. River City is ranked a five-star school, the highest ranking attainable.

Purpose of the Study

Just how do teachers’ beliefs toward reading evidenced-based practices compare to actual instructional evidenced-based practices in their classrooms? Since literacy instruction, beginning in the third grade, places more emphasis on comprehension and higher expectations on the students than in the early elementary grades, why has there been so little research conducted on instructional practices been conducted? Fourth grade reading expectations are particularly demanding as children encounter more difficult textbook content, which often contains abstract concepts and complex vocabulary. Results from the 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) revealed that 37% of fourth graders lacked basic reading skills (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003).

Perhaps in the understanding of teachers’ beliefs about reading instruction and the actual instructional practices can help in the development of instructional strategies that help both teachers and students to read for pleasure and enjoyment with an added bonus of information learning on the side. Also, since there has been no research conducted in the area of magnet school students, a closer look is necessary to make determinations that

might assist regular school students in reading and assist these teachers in insights gained from this research.

Significance of the Study

Research indicates that in order for students to obtain high reading gains and become lifelong readers, reading comprehension (which is the goal of all reading instruction) and reading enjoyment must be the top two goals (Greer, 2002). More than anything else, educators of reading want students to enjoy reading. The reason being that students who enjoy reading and read for their own pleasure, improve their reading skills and increase their test scores at a much faster rate than those who do not (Allington, 2001). Educators know that when students truly enjoy what they read and are deeply involved in the reading process, their emotional memory is tapped. When students are extremely interested in what they are reading, they use more of their brain power to learn and remember and their reading improves rapidly.

Since not all reading in classrooms garners reading enjoyment from students, it should be a priority of all educators to make reading of any subject more understandable and enjoyable for students. If by modeling, students see that teachers enjoy reading the traditional subjects (such as science, social studies, history), and if teaches model excitement in the subject areas, this would possibly ignite an interest in students, and in doing so commence an enjoyment of reading not just novels, but other subjects as well. A practice such as assigning, reading, and answering questions on a topic must give way to more interaction between students and between students and teachers. More of the evidence-based practices must be used to hook students before gains can be made in scores and in the teaching of reading.

However, since it is not known what teachers perceive as evidence-based practices. The surveying teachers' perceptions of evidence-based practices in reading relative to their actual practices in the classroom should lead to a better understanding of how the use of evidence-based practices in classrooms are to others. Only by "knowing" evidence-based practices and "teaching" using these practices can a difference be made.

Research Questions

Based on the importance of teacher beliefs about evidence-based practices, and the actual practices used in their classrooms, the following research questions are asked:

- What do the third-fifth grade teachers in an elementary magnet school indicate are evidence-based practices in literacy instruction?
- Do these same teachers use the indicated practices in their teaching of reading?

Definitions and Acronyms

Bloom's Taxonomy-This was created in 1956 under the leadership of educational psychologist Dr. Benjamin Bloom in order to promote higher forms of thinking in education such as analyzing and evaluating rather than rote learning. There are six major categories starting with the simplest behavior to the most complex: knowledge (remembering), comprehension (understanding), application (applying), analysis (analyzing), synthesis (creating), and evaluation (making judgments).

Common Core State Standards Initiative-This is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for

college and the world force. Teachers, parents, and community leaders have all been given opportunities to help create the Common Core State Standards.

Common Core State Standards-These are guidelines for all educators to follow that clearly communicate what is expected of students at each grade level. These standards focus on core conceptual understandings and procedures starting in the early grades and give students the opportunity to master them. Students, parents, and teachers are all on the same page and working together for shared goals. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world so that our children are successful in college and careers.

Integrated Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (iLEAP)-This test is administered to all third and fourth grade students in Louisiana and is aligned with the state's content standards, benchmarks, grade level expectations, and Common Core State Standards in English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. It combines a norm-referenced test, which compares a student's test results to the performance of students in a national sample, with a criterion-referenced test, which reports student results in terms of the state's achievement levels.

Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP)-This test is administered each year to all fourth graders in the state and measures how well a student has mastered the Louisiana state content standards.

Magnet School-This a public school in which students are tested for admission and must meet a cut-off score to be admitted to that particular school.

National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP)-This is the largest continuing and nationally representative assessment of what our nation's students know and can do

in core subjects. It is a congressionally mandated project. The NAEP results are designed to provide data on student achievement in various subjects, and are released as The Nation's Report Card.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)-The purpose of this agency is to fulfill a Congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and reports complete statistics on the condition of American education; conduct and publish reports; and review and report on education activities internationally.

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)-This is a group of states working together to develop a set of assessments that meaure whether students are on track to be successful in college and their careers. These high quality K-12 assessments in Mathematics and English Language Arts/Literacy give teachers, schools, students, and parents better information whether students are on track in their learning and for success after high school, and tools to help teachers customize learning to meet student needs.

CHAPTER 2

"To learn to read is to light a fire, every syllable that is spelled out is a spark."—Victor Hugo (1802-1885) was a French romantic poet, novelist and dramatist.

Review of Literature

In the United States, there is a major problem with the failure of students learning To read. Approximately 40% of children throughout the United States struggle with basic Reading skills (Brynildssen, 2001). According to the National Assessment Education Progress Report (NAEP), 44% of fourth graders are reading below basic levels (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). The "basic" level is defined as "partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade level" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). It is estimated that more than $2 billion is spent each year on students who repeat a grade because they have reading problems (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Forty-four percent of American fourth grade students cannot read fluently, even when they read grade-level stories aloud under supportive testing conditions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Fifteen percent of all fourth graders read no faster than 74 words per minute, a pace at which it would be difficult to keep track of ideas as they are developing within the sentence and across the page (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

With all of these negative statistics, what is wrong with our educational system that still allows for children to drop out of school due to reading problems or graduate with only a fourth-fifth grade reading level?

Researchers and educators alike agree that early literacy begins at home. Access to printed materials has been found to be the "critical variable affecting reading Acquisition" (McQuillan, 1998). Dickinson and Tabors (1991) found that the home

environment, specifically the availability of reading material, is a stronger predictor of later academic achievement than socioeconomic status. On average, children in economically disadvantaged communities have zero to two age-appropriate books in their homes as compared to 54 books for middle-income homes and over 199 books in the homes of high-income homes. Sixty-one percent of low-income families have no books at all in their homes for their children (McQuillan, 1998). A child from a low-income family enters kindergarten with a listening vocabulary of 3,000 words, while a child of a middle-income family enters with a listening vocabulary of 20,000 words (Hart & Risley, 1995). Sixty-two percent of parents with high socioeconomic status read to their children every day, compared to 36% of parents with a low socioeconomic status (Coley, 2002). While these statistics are heart-rending, researchers and educators are very limited in what they can do to improve socioeconomic status in the United States. There are various organizations that do collect and donate books to low-income families, but the need is always greater than the resources.

A variety of different methods of teaching reading have been tried in the United States. There are two main camps of teaching reading: phonics advocates (scientifically-based reading instruction) and whole language advocates (balanced reading instruction). Phonics advocates believe that in order for a child to read a large vocabulary of words correctly and fluently, then that child must have detailed knowledge of spelling-speech patterns. The whole language advocates believe that students do not need to be able to sound out words, but should be able to look at unknown words and figure them out by context (Adams, 1990, pp. 23-24). Today, most students are exposed to both methods;

phonics in the lower elementary grades and whole language in the upper elementary grades. This is also combined with a reading program that also contains both elements. These programs come as a packaged unit including workbooks and a teacher's manual. A district usually buys the entire package for the whole district since it is most cost effective. Of course, many districts use older programs until they can arrange the financial means for buying newer textbooks.

Where educators can have a significant impact is in the area of evidenced-based practices in literacy instruction. Here, is where educators can make a difference provided they know the areas of best practices in literacy instruction. As stated in Chapter 1, most of the evidence-based practices for comprehensive literacy instruction listed are generally accepted by experts in the field of literacy instruction. Each of the practices will now be discussed.

Create a Classroom that Fosters Motivation to Read

Dolezal, Welsh, Pressley, and Vincent (2003) found that moderately and highly engaging literacy teachers designed the classroom environments for student success by providing areas for cooperative learning, exploring, and reading, There was easy access to books for independent reading. Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, Rankin, Mistretta, Yokoi, and Ettenberger (1997) indicated that in the primary grades, effective teachers used a wide assortment of texts, including poems, expository titles, newspapers, magazines, environmental print, resource books, and pattern-predictable books. Researchers found that effective teachers often employed small group instruction. Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Mistreat-Hampton, and Chavarria (1998) observed fourth and fifth grade teachers using small groups for various purposes such as literature circles,

reteaching, and mini-lessons. The design of the rooms supported whole group, small group and individual instruction. Block, Oakar, and Hurt (2002) indicated that the display of student work was important and gave the classroom a home-like environment. Research strongly indicates that when students' environmental preferences are met, they are more likely to associate reading with pleasure, to read for longer periods, and overall, to achieve higher scores in reading (Carbo, 2007).

According to the International Reading Association's position statement for excellent reading teachers (2000), classroom libraries should have at least seven books per child. Allington (2002) recommends a classroom library with 500 or more books, evenly divided between various types of fiction and informational texts and evenly split between books that are on grade level and those that are slightly below (notice that he did not state anything about books above grade level). Morrow, Tracey, and Del Nero (2011) suggest that there should be baskets of books grouped by level of difficulty. Gambrell et al.'s (1996) study showed that classrooms with a large supply of books tend to have children who read more frequently and have more quality literary experiences, both at school and at home. Not only should a classroom have a large quantity of books, but according to Allington (2006), the display and organization of books also can enhance reading among students. He suggests having the covers of the books displayed rather than the spines, change the displays often, and use a theme to enhance background knowledge. Also, he suggested that the teacher preview a small selection of books daily to pique the interests of the students. "The more books that children are exposed to, and know about, the more likely they are to read" (Gambrell, 1996, p. 22).

Students like to work together and learn from one another. Teachers can establish settings in which students work together as partners or teams rather than individually. This gives the students more of a sense of responsibility for their learning than just relying on the teacher to impart knowledge and then give it back on a test. Students begin to see new questions and ways to interpret what they just read. They read, share, question, study, and reflect which deepens their understanding of the passages (Ogle & Lang, 2011).

Teach Reading for Everyday Purposes

According to Purcell-Gates (2002), authentic literacy is the, "…reading and writing of real-life texts for real-life purposes in the literacy learning classroom" (p. 1). To be authentic, a text must be like texts that are used by readers outside of the classroom. Too often in classrooms, many tasks are inauthentic, unrealistic, and not useful for real-world literacy activities. Authentic tasks should include activities such as reading and writing for real audiences (Capello, 2006), reading to engage in a discussion for a book club or discussions with other students (Raphael, Florio-Ruane, George, Hasty, & Highfield, 2004), and reading to make sense of their lives and the world around them (Dyson, 2003). Reading should not be for the sake of answering questions on a test. However, all reading in a classroom cannot be authentic simply because not all books contain the necessary skills to teach a student to read such as, leveled readers, phonics charts, spelling lists, decoding skills, comprehension skills, advanced vocabulary, and fluency.

Students are constantly involved with text out of school. They are networking on Facebook and Twitter, blogging, texting, reading magazines, reading billboard

advertisements, or creating lyrics, raps, or rhymes. There are specific literacy skills that they have in order to do these things effectively. Students read and interact with text in such forms as song lyrics, internet sites, sets of directions, electronic gaming rules, sending e-mail. Many students read after school because they have heard about something that sounds interesting. It may be that simply being around others who are actively engaged in a variety of literacy activities is sufficient motivation to read what others recommend (Alvermann, Hagood, Heron-Hruby, Hughes, Williams, & Yoon (2007). Students need to see that reading is not just limited to school, but it has a purpose in their lives. Helping students see that they use literacy skills and strategies in everyday life is important (Afflerbach, Kim, Crassas, & Cho, 2011).

Teach the Five Components of Reading Regularly

The report of the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) identified phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension as critical to the development of the reading process. The first block of reading is phonemic awareness which is an important pre-reading skill. Phonemes are the smallest units making up spoken language. Phonemes combine to form syllables and words. According to the International Reading Association's position statement on phonemic awareness and the teaching of reading (1998), phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and "segment" individual sounds in *spoken* words. It has nothing to do with print, letters, or phonics. Phonemic awareness includes being able to think of words that rhyme; perceiving that some words have the same or very similar sounds at the beginning, middle, and end; and be able to segment and blend sounds in spoken words (Gillet & Temple, 2000).

Phonics is the process of linking sounds to letter symbols and combining them to make words (NICHD, 2000). Phonics help learners match the letters of the alphabet to the already known speech sounds. This does not mean that phonics should be taught to the exclusion of all other approaches. As Ehri (2003) states, "Systemic phonics instruction by itself does not help students acquire all the processes they need to become successful readers. Phonics need to be combined with other forms of instruction to create a comprehensive reading program" (p. 16). Lessons should have direct instruction in phonics embedded in a print-rich, comprehensive literacy program and delivered in brief, individualized lessons.

Children must also build up their reading, writing, speaking, and listening vocabularies, along with an interest in words, their meanings, and their power. When children are interested in words and are motivated to learn new words, they perceive a new purpose for reading and for listening. Words are the symbols we use to express ideas. They are the very foundation of reading. Research shows that "vocabulary is the glue that holds stories, ideas, and content together and that it facilitates making comprehension accessible for children" (Rupley, Logan, & Nichols, 1999, p. 5). Vocabulary development is a process that goes on throughout life and can be enhanced in the classroom. On average, students add 2,000-3,000 words a year to their reading vocabularies (Anglin, 1993). This means that they learn from six to eight new words *each day*. Research has shown that most students need to encounter a word 12 times before they know it well enough to improve their comprehension (Biemiller, 2004). A vocabulary classroom includes fun with words, connections to students' experiences,

repetition, student examples, teacher examples, gestures, elaboration, and student-friendly definitions.

Comprehension, or understanding of what we read, is the ultimate goal of reading instruction. Comprehension can be affected by the reader's interest in and background knowledge of the topic, strategies the reader knows how to use; the style, layout, and organization of the text; difficulty of the vocabulary used; and the presence or absence of illustrations, charts, and diagrams (Weaver, 2002). Comprehension can also be affected by the situation in which the reading takes place and the students' self-concept and the social groups to which they belong (Irwin, 1991). Brown and Briggs (1991) found that repeated reading activities as well as reading a wide variety of texts can facilitate comprehension and develop story knowledge. Duke (2000) indicated that children need to read a wide variety of genres—not only narrative, but information, procedural, biographical, persuasive, and poetic. Duke also continues to state that comprehension should be taught in all subjects since each school subject requires the ability to read in specific genres. Effective reading comprehension instruction requires continuous teaching about the ways to use techniques to develop the comprehension skills and strategies of all students.

The last component of reading is fluency. In fluent reading, word recognition is sufficiently automatic and accurate so that a reader's attention is focused on the meaning of the text (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). The aim of fluency practice is to increase the automatic response of readers to the words that account for the majority of the words in text. Reading fluency is an important part of the reading process and it should be part of any effective reading curriculum. It builds on a foundation of oral-language skills,

phonemic awareness, familiarity with letter forms, and efficient decoding skills. Research indicates that while fluency in and of itself is not sufficient to ensure high levels of reading achievement, fluency is absolutely necessary for that achievement, because it depends on and reflects comprehension (Chard, Pikulski & McDonagh, 2006).

All readers need experience daily with some form of work-recognition instruction, oral reading with teacher support, development of sight-word knowledge, development of vocabulary, and comprehension strategies instruction. The ultimate goal of any teacher is to gradually release the responsibility of learning from the teacher to the student. To accomplish this, the teacher must first describe, teach and model a new skill or strategy. Then leaning moves to where the student practices the skill or strategy and the teacher offers assistance and feedback. With continual practice, the teacher still offers explicit instruction if needed and specific and understandable feedback. Gradually, more and more of the instruction and learning rests with the student and the teacher acts more as a model and mentor. Becoming an excellent reader occurs over years. Reading acquisition is a longitudinal development and requires the skills and instruction from not only educators, but parents, administrators, and community leaders.

Allow Time for Self-Selected Independent Reading

Hiebert and Martin (2009) believe that opportunity to read is a critical component of the reading curriculum. In typical classrooms, it is not unusual to find that students read and write for as little as ten percent of the day; 30 minutes of reading and writing activities in a 300 minute school day (Allington, 2001). In many classrooms, a 90 minute reading block produces only 10-15 minutes of actual reading, or less than 20 percent of the allocated reading time is spent reading. In some classrooms, 20 minutes of actual

reading across the school day is a common event which includes reading in all subjects (Knapp, 1995). Where is the rest of the time spent? In many cases, the time is spent on test preparation workbooks, workbooks that came with the reading series, copying vocabulary definitions from a dictionary, and answering comprehension questions. Reading research (Allington, 2009; Hayes & Ahrens, 1988; Stanovich, 1986b) has indicated that the amount of time spent reading is a major contributor to increased vocabulary and comprehension. Adequate time for reading is essential so that students have the experience that is needed to increase reading proficiency.

During the reading block, it is important to allow students to freely choose books they want to read. Rasinski (1988) states, "Student interest and student choice should be an integral part of an elementary reading program if students are going to be turned onto reading and become lifelong readers" (as cited in Kragler & Jolley, 1996, p. 354). Allowing students to self-select their books results in more involvement and thus more motivation to read. According to Kragler (2000), "Self-selection allows students more latitude to be deeply involved with the learning process, thus fostering an interest in, as well as developing an ownership of, the reading process" (p. 133). Students should be reading books at their independent level, instructional level, and frustrational level. Teachers will need to know their students' levels and guide the students in the self-selection process. As Cunningham, Hall, and Sigmon (1999) state:

> If children consistently pick books that are much too easy for them, Teachers may recommend more challenging books. Likewise, if children select Books that are much too hard, teachers may show them how to choose books closer to their level. (p. 32-33)

Students like to read books that they can draw personal connections to or books that speak to their interests and expertise. However, what is of utmost importance it that

students individually select a book that is “challenging yet understandable” (Ediger, 1999, p. 3).

Provide Students with a Wide Variety of Literature and Genres

According to Ouzts, Taylor, and Taylor (2003), teachers at the elementary level need a broad knowledge of children’s literature. Although it is impossible to know all the literature that has been published, teachers can know about some books in many different genres. Teachers need to not only understand the literacy elements, but show excitement about the literature that is in the classroom. This in turn, causes many students to develop an appreciation of literature and the pleasure that reading can bring. Elementary teachers also need to know a wide variety of authors and illustrators and their works and need to know how to prepare relevant activities based upon the literature. A teacher can keep students’ attention long enough to develop an interest in a book by allowing students to self-select books during an allotted time, present literature daily, establish attractive reading centers, and provide literature-related activities (Hickman, 1981). Literature can be used during read-alouds, teacher-guided instruction, and for independent reading. With the new Common Core State Standards, most of the text in reading series are geared toward informational text.

Build, Link, and Expand Using Multiple Texts

Students understand new information based solely on how it relates to what they already know or their prior knowledge (Braunger & Lewis, 1998). Pressley (1999) indicates that students use prior knowledge for a variety of purposes during reading, including using prior knowledge to anticipate content and monitor predictions, accepting and rejecting ideas, and using their prior knowledge to form interpretations. Each

student's previous experiences are unique and as a result each student has different background knowledge to assist with comprehension (Leu, Jr. & Kinzer, 2003). According to Allington and Cunningham (2010), the most important factor in determining how much readers will comprehend is their level of knowledge about the topic. The demand placed on background knowledge accelerates as student's progress through the grade levels. Students are required to activate and apply previously learned concepts in new ways (Fisher & Frey, 2009). The more extensive a reader's background knowledge, the easier it is to acquire new information from texts (Alfassi, 2004). Klaudia and Guthrie (2008) found that fluency is heavily impacted by the level of background knowledge that a reader has about a topic. Prior knowledge is the foundation upon which new meaning is built. Teachers need to assess student's conceptual understanding, values, beliefs, and link them to new ideas, skills, and competencies to prior understanding.

There are several strategies a teacher can use to help students build background knowledge. Duke (2003) suggests that teachers use informational texts. The classroom library needs to be filled with texts that provide students with numerous opportunities to learn content in a wide variety of topics. Another way to build background knowledge is to create visual or graphic organizers that help to students to see not only new concepts, but also how their previous knowledge connects to the new knowledge and how the new and old text is related (Miller, 2002). Students then learn how to compare texts, how to compare texts to their own experiences, and how to compare texts to what is happening in the world around them.

Another strategy is to expand background knowledge is to read aloud. In 1985, *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading* identified read

aloud as “the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 23). This same report also identified reading aloud as “a practice that should continue throughout the grades” (p. 51). When teachers are reading aloud age-appropriate books on a variety of topics, background knowledge is being expanded (Moustafa, 2008). Every story read to students from any genre contributes to building the background knowledge in some way.

Presenting new information through a variety of related texts offers multiple opportunities for students to attach new knowledge to their already existing background knowledge. Thematic and integrated units can also help students expand their background knowledge across content areas, Thematic approaches to instruction have been prompted by a concern that school learning is too often fragmented, unconnected, and, as a result, are not especially meaningful (Routman, 2000). Thematic units appear to increase positive attitudes about reading and writing since these tasks always take place within authentic contexts (Leu, Jr. & Kinzer, 2003).

Emphasize Community and Collaboration for Learning

Learning is social. That means that students interact with other students, students interact with teachers, teachers interact with other teachers, teachers also interact with parents, and parents interact with students. Learning occurs in large groups, small groups, and pairs. Teaching is an extended conversation between students and their teachers (Fisher & Frey, 2007). Talking is purposeful talk, not simply chatter. According to Allington and Johnston (2002) indicate that the talking should be problem-posing and problem solving talk related to the reading. Many effective teachers use socially

interactive structures like books clubs, reading buddies, and writing clubs to enhance learning (Bogner, Raphael, & Pressley, 2002). Also these classrooms are characterized by high interactivity between teacher and students and among students and students (Topping & Ferguson, 2005). The focus is on social and cooperative activities. Rather than a classroom dominated by the teacher talking, there is ongoing, deep discussions between students and the teacher. Questioning, asking students' opinions, and how they arrived at a certain conclusion are examples of classroom-directed talk. Dolezal et al. (2003) add that using humor, jokes, and an enthusiastic delivery when interacting with students gives students the feeling that the teacher cares about them, their ideas, their concepts, and their opinions. Students also seem to grow as readers when they are allowed to share and evaluate literature in the classroom. "Opportunities for sharing and talking with others about books is an important factor in developing engaged, motivated readers and supports the contention that social interactions have a positive influence on reading achievement" (Gambrell, 1996, p. 22). "Children need the opportunity to interact with both peers and adults in a wide variety of setting as they are learning and practicing language and literacy knowledge, skills, and strategies (Braunger & Lewis, 1998, p. 2). Collaborative learning involves students working together in small groups to help each other understand the material presented. According to Graves, Joel, and Graves (1998), the learning community (peers and teachers) also enhances interpersonal relationships, critical thinking, and helps build relationships among various social, ethnic, and racial groups. The classroom becomes a community of learners where everyone works collaboratively and cooperatively.

Balance Teacher-Led Activities and Discussions with Student-Led Activities and Discussions

According to Larson (2000), students in classrooms that hold teacher-led discussions are active participants in constructing their knowledge rather than passive listeners who only receive information taught by the teacher. Teachers who lead discussion groups in the classroom have two major concerns. The first is the content of the discussion and making sure that it meets the objectives of the lesson. The second concern is the process of the discussion itself. The teacher needs to help the students actually discuss the questions at hand, not just be a bystander. The teacher's job is to get the ball rolling by asking a question, maintaining the discussion, and finally summarizing and wrapping up the discussion. The teacher is an active participant in the group; questioning, listening, and responding. The teacher needs to make sure that the students learn the appropriate material and make sure that the students are the ones doing all of the discussing. Most of these discussions limit the opportunities for students to use higher-level thinking skills if all the teacher asks are questions aimed primarily at the knowledge level of Bloom's Taxonomy (Wilen, 2004). Wilen also indicated that teacher-led classroom discussion should consists of students developing opinions or ideas, students being able to support their beliefs with evidence, and all ideas being open and subjected to praise and criticism. In this aspect, students are taking a more active role in their learning process.

Compared with teacher-led discussions, student-led literature discussion groups often feature more equitable dialogue and more student talk which encourages exploratory talk.

> Exploratory talk is that in which partners engage critically but constructively with each other's ideas. Statements and suggestions are sought and offered for joint consideration. These may be challenged and counter-challenged, but challenges are justified and alternative hypotheses Offered. In exploratory talk, knowledge is made publicly accountable and reasoning is visible in the talk. Participants actively seek each other's ideas and all children are actively involved. (Mercer, 1995, pp. 8-9)

According to Maloch (2002), teacher-led discussions are more the norm in classrooms with many teachers using a recitation-style structure, commonly called IRE—teacher initiation, student response, teacher evaluation. Transition to a more student-led discussion format can be difficult and it requires the teacher's support as students develop new skills related to both the interaction and the content of literature discussion groups (Jewell & Pratt, 1999). In this way, the teacher becomes more the facilitator than the leader. As Worthy and Beck (1995) noted that moving toward more student-led discussion involves changing the teacher's role from "lesson controller to discussion facilitator, through changes in teacher-student interactions" (p. 313). Research on participation in student-led discussions indicate that when students are allowed more time to talk about topics that are meaningful to them, their responses are more complex than when they simply respond to a teacher's question (Almasi, 1995). There are many benefits to a student-led discussion. Almasi (1995) indicates that there is an increase in oral language development; Fox and Williamson (1997) there is more engagement and enjoyment of literature; and Berne and Clark (2005, 2006) there is the potential to help students learn the comprehension process. They can help students to learn group processes skills and an appreciation of literature (Berne & Clark, 2008).

Many teachers are reticent to incorporate student-led discussions groups into their classroom. For many teachers, this feels like they are relinquishing control in their

classrooms. They worry that they students may miss the objectives of the lesson, that the students may spend very little time in discussing the subject but instead get off topic, and/ or that the whole classroom will become totally wild and uncontrollable,. Any of these concerns can happen if the teacher does not spend the time and effort modeling student-led discussion groups, teaching students about the roles they have in the group, setting behavior guidelines, and the idea of open and voluntary exchange (Larson, 2000; Mercer, 1995).

Use Technology that Expands and Links Concepts

Computer technology now gives educators an ever expanding supply of possible applications. The new CCSS addresses computer literacy by requiring that students in the upper elementary grades make and present multimedia presentations. Labbo, Phillips, and Murray (1995-1996) indicate that technology can be incorporated into the classroom when teachers demonstrate the use of the computer during whole-group and small-group time. Students can compose and print out notes to parents, compose a class newsletter, maintain a calendar of events, create signs for classroom events, and make a list of “to do” activities. The list is endless. Papert (1980) suggests that children will use a computer in ways that they see the adults in their lives use the computer. Students in the upper elementary grades can use the computer for their writing assignments and at the end of year, create a book out of their collection. Teachers can collect books on a certain theme and have computer-based learning center activities to go along with it. Some of these activities can be programs already available or a combination of several activities from several different programs. The teacher should be sure and provide several activities so that students can select an activity that they find interesting and meaningful. McKenna

(1998) indicates that listening to an electronic version of a story or book can help extend vocabulary, increase knowledge of words, and help develop a sense of story. McKenna, Labbo, and Reinking (2003) found that involving teachers and students in creating multimedia books reports on the computer had far greater benefits for reading and writing than did the regular hand-written book report. Also, they found that the use of technology involved them in a much richer socially interactive environment.

Many students will gain more from accessing the full version of a text than in using other options on the computer. Many textbooks and stories are available as e-books with distinct digitized pronunciations. If a textbooks passage and/or story is not available, teachers can use a program, such as *Write: Outloud* to create these passages. In this program, textbooks pages can also be scanned. The use of e-books often gives students the inner confidence they need in order to succeed in reading at higher levels (*Write: Out loud website).*

It is evident that literacy instruction is no longer defined as print on pages in books. Teachers must begin, even as early as kindergarten, to help their students use digital forms of reading and writing. There are many obstacles to this end. One is the comfort level of the teacher in using digital lessons. Many feel that extensive professional development is needed in this area and/or the professional development that they receive is too much too fast with no training of how to incorporate it into the current curriculum. Today's teachers realize that they are going to have to prepare students for a literacy in which they, themselves, were not prepared. This can appear as a daunting task with too much to learn and too little time (Labbo et al., 1995-1996; McKenna et al., 2003).

Of course, money is the main issue as to why students are not taught digital lessons more often. Most schools do not have the physical or administrative infrastructure needed to use their computers effectively (Reinking, Labbo, & McKenna, 1999). Most classrooms have a low computer to student ratio or, if there is a computer lab, there is a low classroom to computer time ratio. This issue will have to be dealt with as we fast-forward even the next ten years. As our CCSS guides teachers to more digitalized results, and PARCC assessment will be totally online, our communities will have to address the issues of digital literacy. The day is fast approaching when computer technology will be as fundamental to literacy as print technology is today.

Use a Variety of Relevant Assessments

Reading assessment has become an overwhelming driving goal of CCSS. The amount of testing now encompasses not only the traditional testing in the spring each year beginning in the third grade (LEAP & iLEAP), but now PARCC assessment is also being added in spring 2015.

According to Farr (1992), “Tests should be considered as nothing more than attempts to systematically gather information” (p. 27). This assessment information is supposed to be used to help with curriculum planning.

Norm-referenced tests can be of some value to us, but they should not be the only form of assessment. Another form of assessment may be the portfolio. Portfolio assessment is a sampling of a student’s work selected by the student and the teacher to represent what the student is able to do. A successful portfolio required regular and frequent attention in order to gather enough samplings to make a good assessment of the

student's knowledge. The whole process should involve frequent self-analysis by the student with teacher input (Steineke, 2009).

What a teacher must understand is that the portfolio belongs to the student and the student should have choice about what goes in and personalize the portfolio. Every portfolio in a classroom should not look the same. Portfolios are not to be displayed and Bragged about although students can certainly show them to their parents and any administrators that ask. A portfolio is a constantly shifting document; adding to as wanted, weeded out as needed, rearranging, and selecting. The role of the teacher is to advise the students in the showing of a variety of material reflecting the reading-writing-thinking process plus what goes on daily or weekly in the classroom. This is not just a folder in which to collect materials throughout the year, but a collection of reflective, individualized material in which the teacher and student have met on numerous occasions and discussed and analyzed material to be collected (Daniels & Bizar, 2004).

Teachers' Perceptions of Evidenced-based Practices

Very little research could be found in the area of what practicing teachers perceive as evidence-based practices. Vaughn and Sherman (2010) conducted a study in which 30 administrators (practicing principals, assistant principals, and instructional specialists at the elementary, middle and high school level) were asked two questions during an interview. The two questions were: In a classroom observation of a teacher, what techniques and strategies are you searching for that tell you the teacher is using best practices? How much time during the school day do you spend working with teachers training them in best practices in curriculum? Twenty-one of the thirty participants used the terms "student success and/or student engagement" to mean that if students were

successful, and if students were engaged, then best practices were being used by the teacher. Their responses indicated that as long as students were successful and engaging in the lesson then it was a foregone conclusion that best practices were being used. What they failed to understand is that student success and student engagement are *products* of best practices. A teacher can still be using best practices, but have some students that are not being successful in that particular subject. What is interesting is the authors' findings for question two. The authors were under the assumption that these participants were familiar with best practices. However, only three of the thirty participants used the concept "best practices" in their responses. Instead, they used terms such as "instruction" or "curriculum" or "strategies." Fifteen of the participants said that managerial duties consumed over 50 percent of their time. However, most of the participants stated that in some form or another, curriculum was dealt with on an as needed basis.

If this study is any indication of the "normal educational professionals" in the year 2010, then it is safe to say that our administrators and teachers do not necessarily have a working knowledge of evidence-based practices in reading. The No Child Left behind Act (2001) requires that teachers use research based techniques in their classrooms, yet they have not been trained in these areas, or did not understand that these areas are Evidence-based Practices and as such are to be used in the classroom. These professionals spent less than 50 percent of their day making sure that the faculty knows what best practices are, how to use them, and that they are being used. If principals are relying on the state's teacher evaluation instrument (as mentioned in this article), then they are missing the critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making skills that go into these practices.

Summary

The United States faces an epidemic of students not being able to read beyond a fourth-fifth grade level. Billions of dollars are spent each year on students that read below the basic levels on standardized tests, who have to repeat a grade, cannot read fluently, and/or read at such a slow pace that they have difficulty tracking ideas within sentences and thus paragraphs. Researchers and educators agree that early literacy begins at home, but they also agree that they are limited in what they can do to improve home status. These same people agree that a reading curriculum that provides both phonics instruction and whole language instruction is the best way to teach students. Educators have a significant impact in determining the areas of evidenced-based practices in teaching reading. Although in this research, one list of best practices was used, it was noted that these are the ones that most researchers agree upon even if they refer to them by another name.

First, creating a classroom environment that is warm and inviting, provides areas for exploration and learning, includes a wide assortment of texts, displays children's work, has an extensive classroom library, displays book covers, and areas to work in small groups encourages students to not only read, but share, question, study, and reflect on what they have read. Second, students should be taught using "authentic literacy" and connect what they are reading to their everyday lives and what is happening in the world around them. Third, the five components of reading, as identified by the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000), should be taught as much as possible on a daily basis. In the lower elementary grades, the emphasis would be on all five components; phonemic

awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. In the upper grades, the emphasis would be on vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Fourth, students need to be given the opportunity to select books for independent reading. Teachers can guide them in the self-selection process so that they do not get a book that is too far below their reading level or too far above their reading level. Fifth, teachers need to provide students with a wide variety of literature and genres. Even though Common Core State Standards emphasize information texts, educators should provide exposure to all genres. Sixth, since students come into the classroom with a varied amount of prior knowledge, it is imperative that educators build, link, and expand that knowledge by using multiple texts. The use of graphic organizers can help student's link new concepts with previous concepts and see how they are related. Seventh, learning from reading is a social skill and students should be able to use collaborative learning to help them with connecting concepts. Eighth, there needs to be not only teacher-led activities and discussions, but also student-led activities and discussions. Teachers will have to demonstrate how this process works so that it does not become just a time of "social chatter." This is an excellent time for teachers to lead students into higher level thinking skills. Ninth, we are now in the technology age and we can no longer put our heads in the sand and not incorporate it in our classrooms. Technology can become an invaluable tool for teachers and students alike. Last is that teachers use a variety of assessments for students and not just tests. While students need to know how to take different kinds of tests, that should not be the only means of assessment. Assessment also should be "authentic." A portfolio is an excellent example of another way to add a different type of assessment to a student's repertoire.

Very little research has been concerned with what teachers perceive as evidence-based practices, however, what has been noted is that many educators do not use the term "evidence-based practices," but instead use the terms "instruction" or "curriculum" or "strategies" to mean "evidence-based practices." It appears that there is not a clear delineation between these terms.

CHAPTER 3

"In a very real sense, people who have read good literature have lived more than people who cannot or will not read."—S.I. Hayakawa (1906-1982) was a Canadian-born American linguist, semanticist, teacher, writer, and a United States senator from California.

Methods and Procedure

The methodological basis for this study was a qualitative research focus which was designed to identify what teachers of reading in a magnet school perceived as evidence-based practices and how closely those perception related to their actual practices in the classroom. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005):

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative research study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

Information is gathered by a variety of means such as interviews, questionnaires, observations, photographs, videotapes, and other audiovisual materials. The data is then coded which in a sense makes it statistically analyzed; however, in qualitative research, the qualitative data is not quantified, but rather, the data is then used to discover relationships, concepts, characteristics, symbols, and descriptions. The entire purpose of qualitative research is to give meaning to what is observed.

Five Approaches to Qualitative Research

There are five approaches to qualitative research: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Narrative research deals with human experiences and bringing meaning to human activity. Field texts, photos, family stories, journals, conversations, letters and other research activities are the units to

be analyzed to try and understand the way people create meaning in their lives. The whole focus is exploring the life of one or a few individuals (Clandinin, 2006).

Phenomenology research focuses on individual experiences, beliefs, and perceptions. Phenomenologists are trying to understand the essence of the experience. This experience may have been happened to only one person or a group of people. What is being observed is what they experienced and how they experienced it, therefore, multiple interviews, journals, art, poetry, music, and other forms of art are gathered. The end product of this research is called the "essence" of that particular experience (Moustakas, 1994)

Grounded theory research is developing a theory from the data in the field. The grounded theorist is studying a process or interaction involving many individuals and then generating a theory of a process, actions, or interaction shaped by views of a large number of participants. Interviews are the main form of data collecting (Strauss & Corbin, Jr., 1990).

Ethnographical research is based upon the meanings and practices of a culture or a society. The primary forms of data collection are observations and interviews. The ethnographer is looking for cultural themes; shared patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs and language. The end product is cultural portrait of that group which incorporates the view of the participant and the views of the researcher (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

Case study research is involved in developing and in-depth description and analysis of a case that involves an event, a program, an activity, an issue that is shared by more than one individual and in a self-contained (with-in site) setting. Data collection

takes the form of interviews, observations, documents, artifacts, and audiovisual material. In the end, the researcher reports the meaning of the case (Yin, 2003).

This research study was implemented in the terms of a case study. The issue that was studied was what teachers perceived as the evidenced-based practices in reading in an upper elementary magnet classroom and did they align with the observations during reading instruction in the same classrooms. The research was inductive in that the researcher was involved in working back and forth between themes and the data until a theme(s) emerges. Research did not begin with a hypothesis and then try to prove it right or wrong. The data collected allowed conceptual categories and descriptive themes to emerge over time.

Insider and Outsider Perspective

The importance of inside and outsider perspective in qualitative research has long been a bone of contention among researchers (Kerstetter, 2012). Emic (insider) perspectives are those taken by a researcher who is a member of the community being studied. Etic (outsider) perspectives then are those taken by the researcher who is outside the community. Both sides indicate that the point of reference and the bias of the researcher are grounds for contesting research results. There are very few cases in which someone can be characterized as a complete insider or a complete outsider (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). For this reason, many researchers (Mercer, 2007) have moved past the two terms and into what Dwyer and Buckle (2009) have called *the space between* as all researchers fall somewhere in between being complete insiders or complete outsiders. Researchers would move along the continuum according to the research being conducted. In the current study, the researcher will be in the space between. The researcher for this

study teaches at the same school and knows the teachers and staff and considers them as close colleagues, however, the researcher had never observed in any of the classrooms or interviewed any of the teachers or staff until this study. The researcher was not a participant during the observations.

Field Notes

Field notes are both descriptive and reflective. Descriptive field notes in this study were detailed and accurate descriptions of what was going on during the classroom observations was noted. Detailed, concrete, and vivid words were used to describe not only the people involved, but the classroom itself. Quotes were included when possible. Non-verbal communication was also noted. Photographs were used to explore the physical settings. The field notes also contained reminders of things that needed to be done, decisions that needed to be made, and any adjustments to the study (Wolfinger, 2002).

Reflective field notes were an account of what the researcher learned during the study. They included speculations, feelings, ideas, impressions, clarifications, connections, emerging themes, patterns, and connections between experiences. The researcher's preconceptions, moods while conducting the study, opinions, and attitudes were also included in the reflective field notes. An iPad was used for field notes in the classrooms. Immediately upon leaving the observation, time was taken to add to field notes both about the observation and about the researcher's feelings towards the observation. Diagrams of the rooms were also included (Bogden & Bilken, 1992).

Interviews

The interview is probably the most widely employed method in qualitative research. There are two main types of interviews: unstructured and the semi-structured interview. The almost totally unstructured interview is when the researcher asks only a few questions and allows the interviewee to respond freely, almost like a conversation about a topic. A semi-structured interview has a list of questions to be covered (called an interview guide), but there is a great deal of leeway in how to reply. Also the interviewer can move questions around as needed, stop and delve more deeply into an answer, ask a question that is not of the list, but has come up because of an answer. The same questions and wording are used from interviewee to interviewee. The process is very flexible. (Creswell, 2007).

Sampling

In qualitative research, only a sample of a population is selected for a study since broad generalizations about the population as a whole are not being studied. This study used purposive sampling to group the participants according to a preselected criteria that was relevant to the research questions. The research questions for this study were concerned with upper elementary teachers of reading in a magnet school.

Bias

Qualitative researchers have struggled for years with the questioning by quantitative researchers of bias in studies. All participants in research, even the researcher, brings to the investigation biases, beliefs, and assumptions. The important detail to remember is to recognize when either the researcher or the respondents' biases, assumptions, or beliefs are intruding into the analysis of the data. One way to work with

bias is to have the data looked over by a fellow researcher who might be able to alert the investigator of potential bias. It is not the researcher's goal to pass judgment on the participants and the setting, but to report the information and the conclusions.

Social Situation

In selecting the academic situation in which to conduct this study, the researcher chose one elementary magnet school in a local public school district. The parish has a population of approximately 250,000 of which 47% are African-American, 48% are White, 2% are two or more races, and 3% are Hispanic/Latino. There are 455 students enrolled in the school, with 15% of its students receiving free and reduced school meals. Of the 455 enrolled students, 71% are White, not Hispanic; 18% are African-American, not Hispanic; 6% are Asian; 2% are Hispanic; and 3% are Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Its student-to-teacher ratio is 16:1. There are 20 classroom teachers plus 3 teachers of the gifted, and seven enrichment teachers: French, physical education, music, art, science lab, library, and PARCC coordinator. Six of the 20 homeroom teachers have a Masters or above degree, all three teachers of the gifted have a Master's degree, and three of the enrichment teachers also have a Masters or above. Three teachers are nationally board certified as is the principal. There are Talented Arts, Talented Music, and Talented Drama programs for those who qualify according to state guidelines. The gifted program is for students who qualify according to Bulletin 1508 guidelines.

Participants were chosen from the the upper elementary grades (3-5) since this was the concentration of the study. In the upper grades, all of the teachers teach reading. To narrow the focus even more, three teachers were chosen (one from each grade) who had taught the most years. The central focus of the study was the classroom observations

during reading instruction, interviews with the three classroom teachers, faculty interviews, and a questionnaire from the teachers.

Each teacher experienced the same questionnaire and the same instructions from the same person. They were interviewed concerning educational background, evidence-based practices in reading, and instructional practices. The instructional coordinator was also interviewed, however, the interview was tailored more towards evidenced-based practices.

The setting, as described by James Spradley (1980), was a "*single social situation* which was based on the following criteria: simplicity, accessibility, unobtrusiveness, permissibleness, and frequently occurring activities" (p. 40). For this study, conducting participant observation of elementary teachers in their classrooms during reading instruction was the method of choice. The accessibility of the classrooms was very conducive for the investigation and the researcher carefully focused on this single social situation. The researcher was granted permission to observe from any place in the classroom. Acknowledgement of the researcher was also kept to a minimum. The students at this particular school are used to parents, other teachers, observing undergraduate students, and other visitors frequenting the premise which helped to contribute to the unobtrusiveness of the researcher.

Participant Observation

The researcher conducted the study as a participant observer. This included both engaging in the activities in the classroom to a limited degree and observing the activities that occur in the classroom environment simultaneously. According to Spradley (1980) this is known as the moderate participation type where the researcher maintains a balance

between the insider and the outsider roles. One drawback to this type of observation is that the participants may act differently in order to *give* the researcher what they believe the researcher is studying. The researcher did not feel that this happened in this study as the participants already knew who the researcher was and that she also taught at the school. So the participants had no reason to put up a façade as the researcher has already seen them in numerous situations. The researcher had to keep in mind which activities to hone in on due to the research questions and which to not put as much emphasis on. Since teachers were the primary targets in this study, passive participation was deemed more suitable than active participation.

Timeline

Week 1

Permission from principal, teachers, and instructional coordinator

Teacher/instructional coordinator Reading Survey

Observations for five days, 105 minutes per day, for each teacher

Week 2

Observations for five days, 105 minutes per day, for each teacher

Initial interviews with all three teachers and instructional coordinator

Final interview for any follow-up

Domain Analysis

A major component of the domain analysis involved searching for patterns among the abundance of field notes that were collected. Perceptions of evidence-based practices and instructional use of best practices was only derived if relationships were noticed between the classrooms, the teachers, the interviews, and the observations. This required

constant revisiting of field notes in order to pull out strains that have similarities. This was repeated throughout the research.

Focused Observations

After finding patterns within the field notes during the first week of observations, the second week of observations became more focused observations. Spradley (1980) defines a focus observation as "a single cultural domain or a few related domains and the relationships of such domains to the rest of the cultural scene" (p. 101). The investigation honed in on the details of the perceptions of the teachers of evidence-based practices and the observations of the reading instruction in the classroom.

Taxonomic Analysis

Once each domain was decided, then a taxonomic analysis was conducted showing the specific categories and how each one was related to one another. The taxonomy consisted of a graphic representation of the relationships among the domains and their subsets of included terms at all identified levels. A researcher may use an outline form, Venn diagrams, and/ or connecting lines to graphically show all the relationships Along with the taxonomic analysis, a written explanation for the figure has been given.

Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness is evidenced by the following: transferability, dependability, confirmability, and credibility. Transferability refers to evidence supporting the generalization of finding to other contexts. This is like external validity in quantitative research. Dependability is the idea that similar findings would be found if the study was repeated. This is akin to reliability in quantitative

research. Dependability is augmented by rich documentation, triangulation of data, and researcher to researcher agreement. Confirmability refers to the neutrality and the control of researcher bias. Credibility refers to the believability of the findings.

Summary

This study began with the research questions, "What do upper grade elementary teachers perceive as evidence-based practices in reading?" and "Are these perceptions observed during the actual teaching of reading?" Data was analyzed, even during data collection. Essentially, data collection, note-taking, coding, and memoing constantly immediately.

Data triangulation is based on the ideology that "no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors. Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observations must be employed…multiple methods should be used in every investigation" (Denzin, 1978, p. 28). This study used interviews, observations, and a questionnaire for data triangulation.

The following chapter details critical information about teacher's perceptions of evidence-based practices and their actual practices in the classroom and how they are interrelated. The information was the direct result of formal and informal interviews in addition to classroom observations and a survey.

CHAPTER 4

"Any book that helps a child to form a habit of reading, to make reading one of his deep and continuing needs, is good for him."—Maya Angelou (1928-2014) was an American author, poet, dancer, actress, and singer.

Results

This study was conducted at a public school, referred to as River City Elementary Magnet. It was conducted for two consecutive weeks. Throughout the study, interviews, both formal and informal, were conducted with the instructional coordinator, one third grade teacher, one fourth grade teacher, and one fifth grade teacher. Interview lists of questions are presented in Appendix C (see p. 116) and Appendix D (see p. 117). Observations were made during the reading/English/language arts instructional period. This period was 105 minutes per day and included spelling, reading, writing, and grammar. Field notes and a tape recorder were used to obtain the data during the study.

River City Elementary Magnet is one of six elementary magnets in this district. There are 20 classroom teachers who are fully certified, three teachers of gifted, and seven enrichment teachers. Years of experience for teachers range from first year to 30+ years. All teachers participate in continuing in-service training during the school year and during summers. All regular education teachers and teachers of the gifted were required to attend a two-day seminar on the new reading series during the summer of 2014.

The mission statement for River City Elementary Magnet states, "…to provide instruction based on high expectations within a safe environment where all members are treated with dignity and respect" (River City school website). River City Elementary Magnet has a total of 455 students. The demographics of the school are composed of 327 Caucasian, 87 Black, 10 Hispanic, 28 Asian, and 3 Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students.

The maximum number of students allowed per class in kindergarten and first grade is 21. In second through fifth, the maximum number of students allowed per class is 26. Of the twenty classroom teachers, one is Black and all of the rest are Caucasian. All of the enrichment teachers are Caucasian. There are three staff members; two are Caucasian and one is Black.

Reading Textbook

Northwest Parish adopted a new reading series this 2014-2015 school year. It is Wonders by McGraw-Hill (2014). It offers to help students build a strong reading foundation, access complex text, find and use text evidence, engage in collaborative conversations, and write to sources. It also includes a book of short reads to teach/model reading and then guided and collaborative practice of key skills. The stories are divided 50/50 for fiction and non-fiction. The series includes all of the stories in a hardback book and also as e-books on the McGraw-Hill website. Leveled readers are included to differentiate instruction and vocabulary, approximately eight new words per week in the upper grades. On the leveled weekly assessments, vocabulary is not tested. Multiple choice and constructed response items are included in the website assessments. In the lower grades, phonological phonemic awareness, phonics, and high-frequency words are also provided along with Big Books for every story.

Teachers and Faculty Background

The participants in this study were the instructional coordinator (referred to as Mrs. IC), one third grade teacher (referred to as Mrs. Third), one fourth grade teacher (referred to as Ms. Fourth), and one fifth grade teacher (referred to as Mrs. Fifth). The instructional coordinator, Mrs. IC, has a M.Ed. in educational leadership. This year is her

first year as an instructional coordinator. Before this, she taught at a regular public education school for 15 years. (Mrs. IC, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

The third grade teacher, Mrs. Third, has a M.Ed. in educational technology. This year is her 15th year in teaching and she has only taught at River City Elementary Magnet School. Mrs. Third related, "I believe that setting high expectations and a positive learning environment are important components of teaching. Phoneme awareness and letter recognition are extremely important in teaching reading." (Mrs. Third, personal interview, April 2, 2015) She has a total of 23 students, however, after the students identified as gifted leave for reading/English/language arts, there are 19 students remaining. Mrs. Third also teaches math to all of the third grade students. Mrs. Third said:

> I use the "whole brain teaching" method to effectively manage my third grade classroom. An example of this method is the "class-yes" to gain immediate focus on the teacher. When I say 'Class!' and they say 'Yes!' they have to say it the way I said it. If I say 'Classity-class-class!' they have to say 'Yessity-yes-yes!' If I say it loudly, they have to respond loudly. If I whisper, they respond in a whisper. They have to match my tone and intensity. Whole brain teaching is based on how the brain functions. There is a portion of your brain behind your frontal lobe that controls decision making. Whole brain teaching uses this part of the brain to have students ready to take directions from their teacher. It makes teaching so easy and
> brings a little fun back into the classroom! (Mrs. Third, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

The fourth grade teacher, Ms. Fourth, has a bachelor's degree in business administration with a major in marketing as well as her alternate certification to teach elementary school. She has worked at River City for four years. She began her career in the school district as a second grade teacher in 2005. Ms. Fourth stated:

> I believe that building strong relationships with students and their families and continued professional development in the most up-to-date strategies and techniques are important components of teaching. I also believe that independent

> reading time and vocabulary acquisition are extremely important in teaching reading. (Ms. Fourth, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

She has a total of 24 students and after students identified as gifted leave, there are 18 students left. Mrs. Fourth also teaches social studies to all of the fourth grade students.

The fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Fifth, has a bachelor's degree in elementary education. This school year is her 13th year in teaching. She taught at a regular elementary school in Northwest Parish before coming to River City. She has a total of 24 students and after the gifted students leave, there are 19 students remaining. She also teaches social studies to all of the fifth grade students.

The next section will address each of the ten research- based practices in reading. All information was derived from classroom observations, interviews, and completion of the researcher-developed Reading Survey.

Create a Classroom that Fosters Motivation to Read

Dolezal et al. (2003) indicated that the classroom environment should be designed for student success by providing areas for exploring and reading. All three teachers provided easy access to books for independent reading. Ms. Fourth actually had a small rectangular cubbyhole with carpet that was closed in on three sides with a small opening on the fourth side and designated as the reading area. The other two teachers had their books all in one area that was opened to the whole classroom.

Wharton-McDonald et al. (1997) recommended a wide assortment of texts. Ms. Fourth and Mrs. Fifth provided a wide variety of texts, including poems, expository titles, magazines, and resource books. Mrs. Third had more picture books than the other two teachers. Mrs. Third had this to say about a print-rich environment:

> Reading is a skill that can determine success or failure as a student. I believe having an environment full of literacy is a key component for an elementary classroom. If a child is a poor reader in first grade, chances are they will be poor readers in third or fourth grade. Having a literacy rich classroom environment will only emphasize the importance of speaking, reading, and writing. (Mrs. Third, personal conference, April 2, 2015)

Curriculum-based, grade-level appropriate skills and strategies can be introduced to the whole class, ensuring that all the children gain the needed exposure to this material. Teachers may choose to use shared read aloud through modeling for all the students in the class. Ms. Fourth declared the following about modeling behavior:

> Instructional modeling is a must in today's classroom. With the level of performance we expect from children, I have found that sometimes they don't "perform" because they lack understanding of the assignment rather than the content itself. I feel pressured at times to skip the modeling in favor of having more time for centers, but those centers are useless if the students don't understand what they're expected to do. Written and oral instructions aren't always enough to clarify this information for students. (Ms. Fourth, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

Mrs. Third stated, "A teacher should always model the outcome of what is expected from her students. How did we learn to tie our own shoes or ride a bike? Our parents modeled by showing us how." (Mrs. Third, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

The researcher generated a Reading Survey that asked how much time was spent per nine weeks on eight of the ten evidence-based practices. *Create a Classroom that Fosters Motivation to Read* and *Use a Variety of Relevant Assessment* were not included since the classroom setting is created outside of classroom teaching time and the assessment time is required for report card grades. The other eight evidence-based practices are optional. The instructional coordinator and the three teachers were not told that these were evidence-based practices so as not to bias them when they were asked these questions during the interviews.

In Table 1, Mrs. IC indicated on the researcher-generated Reading Survey that she thought all third-fifth grade teachers should provide whole class instruction 20%-35% of the reading time per nine weeks.

Table 1
Mrs. IC Use of Evidence-based Practices for Nine Weeks According to Reading Survey

	Amount of Time Spent Per Nine Weeks					
HOW MUCH TIME PER WEEK SHOULD A 3rd-5th GRADE TEACHER USE THE FOLLOWING IN READING	1-5%	6-10%	10-20%	20-35%	35-50%	More than 50%
1. Whole class instruction				X		
2. Small groups					X	
3. Independent work			X			
4. One-on-one help from teacher			X			
5. Buddy partner			X			
6. Computers		X				
7. Discuss in small groups/pairs recently read book		X				
8. Read for pleasure	X					

In Table 2, Mrs. Third checked on the survey that she used whole class instruction, 20%-35% of the reading time during a nine week period. In timed observations, Mrs. Third taught large group approximately 10% of the time.

Table 2
Mrs. Third's Use of Evidence-based Practices for Nine Weeks According to Reading Survey

	Amount of Time Spent Per Nine Weeks					
HOW MUCH TIME PER WEEK SHOULD A 3rd-5th GRADE TEACHER USE THE FOLLOWING IN READING	1-5%	6-10%	10-20%	20-35%	35-50%	More than 50%
1. Whole class instruction				X		
2. Small groups					X	
3. Independent work				X		
4. One-on-one help from teacher	X					

(Table 2 continued)						
	Amount of Time Spent Per Nine Weeks					
5. Buddy partner					X	
6. Computers	X					
7. Discuss in small groups/pairs recently read book					X	
8. Read for pleasure	X					

In Table 3, Ms. Fourth responded on the survey that she taught whole class instruction 35%-50% of the time. In timed observations, Ms. Fourth taught whole group approximately 30% of the time.

Table 3
Ms. Fourth's Use of Evidence-based Practices for Nine Weeks According to Reading Survey

	Amount of Time Spent Per Nine Weeks					
HOW MUCH TIME PER WEEK SHOULD A 3rd-5th GRADE TEACHER USE THE FOLLOWING IN READING	1-5%	6-10%	10-20%	20-35%	35-50%	More than 50%
1. Whole class instruction					X	
2. Small groups				X		
3. Independent work			X			
4. One-on-one help from teacher	X					
5. Buddy partner		X				
6. Computers		X				
7. Discuss in small groups/pairs recently read book		X				
8. Read for pleasure	X					

In Table 4. Mrs. Fifth related on the survey that she provided whole class instruction more than 50% of the reading time per nine week. In timed observations, Mrs. Fifth taught large group approximately 70% of the time.

Table 4
Mrs. Fifth's Use of Evidence-based Practices for Nine Weeks According to Reading Survey

	Amount of Time Spent Per Nine Weeks					
HOW TIME PER WEEK SHOULD A 3rd-5th GRADE TEACHER USE THE FOLLOWING IN READING	1-5%	6-10%	10-20%	20-35%	35-50%	More than 50%
1. Whole class instruction						X
2. Small groups				X		
3. Independent work					X	
4. One-on-one help from teacher	X					
5. Buddy partner			X			
6. Computers	X					
7. Discuss in small groups/pairs recently read book					X	
8. Read for pleasure					X	

One explanation of using more whole group instruction time when moving from third grade to fifth grade is that the complexity of the text increases as the grade level increases. This requires the teachers to possibly have to provide more background information and/or to help make connections from the student's life to the text. More difficult vocabulary is also used which the teacher may have to explain.

Whole group teaching will not meet the needs to all students. This is why small group instruction is a necessary component in the literacy block. Pressley et al. (1998) suggested the use of small groups for instruction. Mrs. Third and Mrs. Fourth employed small group instruction/centers. Mrs. Third used small groups eight of the ten days that she was observed. There was always a group that worked with Mrs. Third reading the long anthology story, one group writing, one group working on spelling for the week, and the last group using the leveled readers. The groups were approximately 30 minutes in length. Mrs. Fourth used small group instruction five of the ten days observed. She

always had one group working with her using the leveled readers, one group working on task cards that required practicing certain skills for the week, one group reading the long story and completing a graphic organizer for the story, one group using the computer activities provided by Moby Max (see Technology section), and the last group reading library books related to the theme to partners. Ms. Fourth commented:

> Reading centers are an important part of the reading classroom. Students enjoy being able to work independently and choose from activities they view as fun. This time also allows for the teacher to administer progress monitoring assessments as well as reteaching for struggling students. They can be challenging at times, but when they run smoothly, they're well worth the effort. (Ms. Fourth, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

Mrs. Fifth used small groups to partner for fluency check once a week and to complete workbook pages. The designs of all the rooms supported whole group, small group, and individual or one-to-one instruction.

Looking back at Table 1 (p. 61), Mrs. IC indicated that third through fifth grade teachers should provide small group instruction 35%-50% of the reading time. In Table 2 (p. 62), Mrs. Third checked on the survey that she used small group instruction 35%-50% of the reading time during a nine week period. In timed observations, Mrs. Third taught small groups approximately 85% of the time. In Table 3 (pp. 62-63), Ms. Fourth responded on the survey that she taught small group instruction 20%-35% of the time. In timed observations, Ms. Fourth taught small groups approximately 65% of the time. In Table 4 (p. 63), Mrs. Fifth stated that she used small group instruction 20%-35% of the reading time. In timed observations, she taught small groups approximately 28% of the time.

Buddy partners is considered part of small groups. This could easily be observed. Referring back to Table 1 (p. 61), Mrs. IC stated that she thought all third through fifth

grade teachers should allow 10%-20% of the reading time be used with buddy partners in working on reading skills. Mrs. Third's Table 2 (p. 62) indicated that she thought 35%-50% of the reading time should be with buddy partners when only 10% of her reading time was observed to be with buddy partners. Ms. Fourth checked in Table 3 (pp. 62-63) that 6%-10% is what she thinks she uses when she teaches. What was actually observed was 5% of the reading time was spent with buddy partners. In Table 4 (p. 63), Mrs. Fifth chose 10%-20% of the time should be spent with a buddy partner, however, during observations, only 2% of her reading time was spent with students in pairs. It is evident that none of the teachers realized that amount of actual time spent with a buddy partner was as small as it was according to the observations.

When students moved into small groups, it was often, during observations, very difficult to see if a student was working independently or not. Even though a student might be working on a skill, the student would often times talk to someone else or make a comment to the small group. Other students would offer comments even though they might not have been asked for. Therefore, even though this was part of the reading survey, it could not be singled out from small group or buddy partners. As Leu, Jr. and Kinzer (2003) stated the most important goal of all teachers is to develop independent readers. All three teachers gave students numerous opportunities to work independently as one can take note in Tables 2-4 (pp. 62-63). During observations, all three teachers would walk around and observe students during large group and during any wait time in small groups. This gave them the opportunity to monitor independent work and, if needed, answer any questions one-on-one. Although Mrs. IC checked that she thought

one-on-one instruction should be 10%-20% of the reading time (see Table 1, p. 61), the three teachers indicated that it was 1%-5% of the time (see Tables 2-4, pp. 62-63). This is also what was observed.

The display of student work was advocated by Block et al. (2002). Mrs. Third had math papers displayed and said, "When you walk into a classroom or down the hallway, you should always see students' work displayed. Doing this sends the message that their work and their learning matters!" (Mrs. Third, personal interview, April 2, 2015). Ms. Fourth had writings displayed and commented:

> Displaying student work has always been important to me. I was once instructed (by a former principal) to make sure that all writings were ERROR FREE prior to display, which I found utterly ridiculous. To imply to students that only perfection is suitable for sharing is absurd. I do encourage them to provide their BEST work, of course, but I have never complied with the perfection request. (Mrs. Fourth, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

Mrs. Fifth did not have any work displayed.

According to the International Reading Association (2000), classroom libraries should have at least seven books per child. Allington (2006) proposed that a classroom library should have at least 500 books or more evenly divided between fiction and informational texts and on and below grade level. That means that Mrs. Third should have had about 160 books according to the International Reading Association (2000). She had approximately 150 books, which was close to the International Reading Association (2000) goal, but far short of Allington's (2006) goal. Her books were evenly divided between fiction and informational texts, however, she had more books below grade level and only a few above grade level. Mrs. Third indicated that:

> Recent research has shown the more a child comes in contact with books, the better readers they will become. Having a classroom library is vital! Students

> need to be read to, read with, and allowed to interact with books daily. (Mrs. Third, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

Ms. Fourth had well over 500 books. There were equally divided according to fiction and information texts and on, below, and above grade level. Mrs. Fifth had well over 500 books as well. There were also equally divided according to fiction and information texts, however, she had more books on and above grade level than below. Mrs. Fifth had this to say about her classroom library:

> By the time students hit fifth grade, I expect them to go through the books themselves to find something that piques their interests. Usually on the way to looking for a certain book or topic, they find something else that looks interesting to them. (Mrs. Fifth, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

Morrow et al. (2011) expressed that there should be baskets of books grouped by level of difficulty. Mrs. Third had her books in baskets, but there was no organizational strategy used to divide the books. Each book did have the grade level marked on the back. Ms. Fourth was very organized. She had her books in baskets and the baskets were labeled as to the content, such as history, holidays, poetry, earth & space, magazines, plants & animals, etc. She also had a series all in one basket such as the Dork Diaries, Heroes of Olympus, I Survived, and Conspiracy 365. There were baskets filled with only one particular author, for example, Gordon Korman, Beverly Cleary, and Patricia Polacco. She even had baskets for books that students had made. There was a Step-by-Step CLOSE Read poster, a Literary Genres poster, and a 10 Great Reasons to Read poster on the walls in the reading center. (All books had the grade level on the back, also.) Ms. Fourth had this to say about her classroom library:

> In order to foster a love for reading, I do my best to provide a wide variety reading materials for my students. I have TONS of books. Some books are sorted and labeled according to reading level. Other books, especially from popular series or authors, are sorted according to those factors. In addition to simply

> HAVING those books available, students are encouraged to browse and borrow any time they like. (Ms. Fourth, personal interview, April 2, 1015).

Mrs. Fifth had her books on a large bookshelf and a library cart. Everything was mixed together. Each book did have the grade level on the back.

Allington (2006) recommended that teachers preview a small selection of books daily and display books that enhance the theme of study. None of the teachers previewed any books. Ms. Fourth was the only teacher that had a few books on the chalkboard ledge that went along with the theme of the story. Sometimes, Mrs. Fifth would have books that went along with social studies, but not the reading unit for the week.

Teach Reading for Everyday Purposes

Capello (2006) indicated that authentic tasks should include activities such as reading and writing for a real audience. Raphael et al. (2004) advocated reading for discussion with other people. Dyson (2003) suggested reading so students can make sense of their lives and the world around them. All three teachers included a writing that went along with the reading for that week. The writing was a poem, letter, folktale, explanation, or, of course, workbook pages. Also, students discussed the stories not only as a whole group, but also in small groups and pairs. Mrs. IC checked on the researcher-generated Reading Survey that all third through fifth grade teachers should allow discussion of a book in small groups or pairs 6%-10% of the reading time each nine weeks. (see Table 1, p. 61). Mrs. Third checked 35%-50% (see Table 2, p. 62), Ms. Fourth 6%-10% (see Table 3, pp. 62-63), and Mrs. Fifth 35%-50% (see Table 4, p. 63). It was noted during observations, that all three teachers discussed the reading story 35%-50% of the reading time. This did not mean that they spent the discussion going back

over every detail since the beginning of the story. The teachers would ask questions to be discussed or ask for a review or ask someone to reread a paragraph to clarify any definitions or words used. Every day, Mrs. Third and Ms. Fourth related the week's reading lesson to something in their own lives and/or the lives of the students. Mrs. Fifth related it once or twice during the week. Even if they were teaching another subject, they would bring it into the week's reading lesson, connecting everything to the students and the world around them. The teachers constantly brought up the use of literacy skills and strategies in everyday life as suggested by Afflerbach et al. (2011). Mrs. Fifth stated, "The kids get a kick out of me telling something that happened in my family that relates to the reading story or skills. It makes reading more personable. Then they start relating incidences in their lives." (Mrs. Fifth, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

Teach the Five Components of Reading Regularly

The report of the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) identified phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension as critical to the development of the reading process. All three teachers expressed that they did not directly teach phonemic awareness and phonics. They expected these to be taught at previous grade levels.

According to Biemiller (2004), students need to encounter six to eight words each day and use this word at least 12 times before they know it well enough to comprehend it. All three teachers taught the vocabulary that was in the reading series which was six-eight words a week. These were not assessed at the end of the week nor were they gone over each day. Mrs. Third read the words and the definitions as the students followed

along in their books. The students then chose a partner and one would give the word and the other student would have to use it in a sentence. Then they switched places. In large group, Mrs. Third called on a student, gave the word, and then the student would have to either give the definition, ask a question using the word to another student, or use it in a sentence. This whole process took about 20 minutes. This was taught only once per week. Then when the vocabulary word was read in the story, Mrs. Third would stop and ask a student to define the word or use it in a sentence.

Ms. Fourth used Wordly Wise 3000 3rd Edition by Educators Publishing Service (Hodkinson & Adams, 2012) for vocabulary. For grades 3-6, there are 20 lessons with 15 words per lesson for a total of 300 vocabulary words. Ms. Fourth teaches each lesson for a week to a week and a half. A computer-generated assessment is given on the last day. The students begins with Finding Meanings where there is a word list followed by clear, brief definitions and then the students have to combine two phrases that demonstrate a word's meaning in sentence form. In Just the Right Word, students supply the correct vocabulary word or form of the word to replace a definition or phrase. In Applying Meaning, students practice working with formats that mimic those on standardized tests. In Word Study, students learn about Greek and Latin roots, prefixes, suffixes, synonyms, antonyms, analogies, and homophones. Reading Passages provides words in context and integrates critical vocabulary and comprehension skills. The comprehension questions require students to demonstrate high-level word knowledge in original complete sentences. Every lesson culminates in a reading passage which thematically unifies the 15 words in the lesson (Wordly Wise website). On the first day of the lesson, Ms. Fourth

taught the lesson in greater depth than the other days since the words were introduced for the first time. After the first day, each successive lesson was completed by the students independently as homework and then checked the next day in class. Ms. Fourth used either an interactive whiteboard or a document camera for teaching. The first lesson lasted about 20 minutes and thereafter about 10-15 minutes. Students were called on to answer the questions and the rest of the students gave a "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" if they agreed with the answer.

Mrs. Fourth added this about vocabulary acquisition:

> In my nearly ten years as an educator, the children that I have worked with that have the most difficulty in reading struggle most with vocabulary acquisition. They seem to have trouble using word parts, context clues, and other vocabulary decoding strategies as well as seeming to have a limited capacity for retaining and using new vocabulary words. Additionally, probably due to the frustration that comes with struggling to comprehend what they're reading (likely because of their poor vocabulary skills), these students tend to do far less independent reading. Every child I've ever seen make great strides in reading level and ability has been an avid reader outside the classroom. Finding a way to help these struggling readers locate reading material that is below their frustration level, yet still challenging enough to help them grow, is a key component in their future success. (Ms. Fourth, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

Mrs. Fifth used Vocabulary Workshop by Sadlier-Oxford (Sadlier, 2011) for vocabulary. For fifth grade, there are 18 lessons with 12 words per lesson for a total of 216 vocabulary words. Mrs. Fifth teaches the lessons for three days and then test on the fourth day. A computer-generated assessment is given on the fourth day. The students begin with Introducing the Words, where there is a passage to read and then a word list. There is a pronunciation guide for each word followed by the part of speech, several definitions, the word used in a sentence, synonyms, and antonyms. In Match the Meaning**,** there are complete sentences and the student must looks back at the word list and find the word that goes in the blank. In Synonyms and Antonyms, students again

look back at the word list and pick from the multiple choice answers, the correct one that answers the question. In Complete the Sentence, there is a word bank and the student must choose the word that fills in the blank in the short story. Lastly, in Word Association, a student must choose a two-word phrase that means the same as the vocabulary word. The first lesson lasted about 15 minutes since it was the introduction to the words. The successive lessons were for checking purposes only with any questions answered by Mrs. Fifth or other students. Mrs. Fifth said this about vocabulary:

> It is essential that these students learn advanced vocabulary. I know what is coming up next year in middle school and what will be required of them when writing. Gone are the days of the "baby" words or phrases. I tell them to use that thesaurus and use "bigger" words when speaking and writing. (Mrs. Fifth, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

Brown and Briggs (1991) found that repeated reading activities as well as reading a wide variety of texts can facilitate comprehension and develop story knowledge. For reading comprehension, on the first day, Mrs. Third introduced the theme and the essential skills the students would be working on for the week. She read aloud a story, that the children did not have a copy of, to practice listening skills. She asked them questions as she read along. Then she had the students go to the front of the room and form a large circle. Mrs. Third asked what the genre of the story was and the students turned to a neighbor and told the neighbor what it was and why. Then Mrs. Third chose a student to start reading the story and went around the circle changing at the end of each paragraph. She asked questions during the reading and also had the students show her and the rest of the group where the text evidence was for the questions. Verbal praise was given. Students then went back to their seats and in small groups completed a graphic organizer of the story. It was to be finished and checked the next day. The reading circle lasted about 20 minutes and the graphic organizer lasted about 10 minutes. On the second

day, the students turned to a neighbor and retold the story. Mrs. Third asked review questions and called on students randomly to answer the questions. Students completed the graphic organizers, checked them, and discussed them. Again, Mrs. Third questioned students about the genre of the story and the reason it was that genre. Students then went into centers. Mrs. Third stated, "Reading centers in a classroom provide students with the chance to learn independently and also learn the social skills of working in a group setting." (Mrs. Third, personal interview, April 2, 2015). Center One was with Mrs. Third and involved the students taking turns reading the story aloud and answering questions. Mrs. Third made sure the students looked at the illustrations and made predictions. Center Two worked on writing a folktale using an animal. Center Three completed activities off of a spelling menu. Center Four used the leveled readers and partner read by pages and answered the questions in the back of the reader. All three levels had to be read. The groups were about 40 minutes. The third day was a continuation of small groups. Workbook pages were added to the spelling center. The fourth day was large group in the front of the room again, reviewing questions, and vocabulary. The fifth day was the assessment of the reading skills using a cold read. Not counting the fifth day, Mrs. Third taught reading approximately 280 minutes of the 525 minutes available for five days. The remainder of the time was divided between spelling, grammar, writing and PARCC practice.

On the first day of reading, Ms. Fourth introduced the theme of the unit. The students had a worksheet (not provided by the series) comprised of a story and questions. Students were randomly called on to read a paragraph aloud and when finished, students randomly formed small groups and discussed the theme and the text evidence to support

the questions. This lasted about 15 minutes. The next time Ms. Fourth taught reading was exactly a week later. Several days were taken for PARCC practice and Mid-Year Benchmark Testing. Ms. Fourth introduced the vocabulary words. Students were called upon to use them in sentences. For comprehension, the story was read with students taking turns as Ms. Fourth called on them and she would also ask questions and either the student discussed it with a neighbor or answered out loud. Verbal praise was given. Genre was discussed. The third day, Ms. Fourth reviewed the story by asking questions. Students then moved to centers. Center One used the program Moby Max on the computer to read short selections in the same genre and answer questions. Center Two reread the story using a partner and taking turns and then completed a graphic organizer. Center Three was what Ms. Fourth called tasks card. Some of the tasks were to be completed independently and some with a partner. These tasks cards were made by Ms. Fourth and consisted of grammar and spelling activities. Center Four was with Ms. Fourth and consisted of reading aloud the leveled readers and answering the questions in the back of the books citing text evidence. The centers were approximately 35 minutes in length. The fourth day were two center rotations of approximately 20 minutes each. The fifth day was an assessment of the reading skills using a cold read. For five days, Ms. Fourth taught reading approximately 130 minutes of the 525 minutes available. The remainder of the time was divided between spelling, grammar, writing and PARCC practice.

For reading comprehension, Mrs. Fifth introduced the theme of the unit and then Students wrote in their journals the answers to a question that she posed about the theme.

After two minutes, students shared in their small groups. This was then shared in large group. This lasted approximately 30 minutes. Vocabulary from the story was introduced with students in small groups looking for the words in dictionaries, and then using them in a sentence. On the second day, students completed two pages in their workbooks, checked, and then discussed them. Students partnered and fluency was checked using the passage provided by the series. In small groups, students wrote a sentence using the vocabulary words from the story. Mrs. Fifth walked around the room and helped groups. Students moved to large group and a person from each group read the sentence aloud for that particular vocabulary word. This took about 20 minutes. In large group, the story was read with Mrs. Fifth calling on students to read by two paragraphs at a time. Throughout the reading of the story, Mrs. Fifth asked comprehension questions and asked for text evidence. She also pointed out the illustrations to the students and asked for predictions. Verbal praise was given. This lasted about 25 minutes. The third day, genre was discussed. The story was read in small groups with students taking turns. Mrs. Fifth started the fourth day by asking students to summarize the story. Another journal prompt was given concerning the author's message. Reading for the day was a total of 60 minutes. The fifth day was the assessment of the reading skills using a cold read. For five days, Mrs. Fifth taught reading approximately 260 minutes of the 525 minutes available. The remainder of the time was divided between spelling, grammar, writing, and PARCC practice.

Chard et al. (2006) proposed that although fluency in and of itself is not enough to ensure high levels of reading achievement, is it absolutely necessary for that achievement because it depends on and reflects comprehension. All River City Elementary Magnet

students participate in Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) three times a year. DIBELS is a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from K-6. Fluency is one of the seven measures used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy skills. Mrs. Third and Ms. Fourth indicated that did not practice fluency with the whole class, but only pulled those students aside who did not make benchmark on DIBELS. Mrs. Fifth had students partner read for fluency once a week and, if possible, twice a week. She also pulled those students aside who indicated problems on DIBELS. Ms. Fourth gave this opinion about fluency:

> While fluency is an important component of reading, I find that occasionally, the emphasis on fluency can have a negative effect. I have taught a handful of students that have excellent comprehension while not necessarily reaching the fluency benchmark set for them. When they try to "speed up" to reach that magic number, their comprehension takes a nosedive. Conversely, I have taught students who can read smoothly and beautifully and at a faster pace, yet don't seem to retain much of what they've read. (Ms. Fourth, personal interview, April 2, 2015).

Allow Time for Self-Selected Independent Reading

Hiebert & Main (2009) believe that the opportunity to read is a critical component of the reading curriculum. Allington (2001) stated that in a typical classroom, it is not unusual to find the students read and write for as little as ten percent of the day. Rasinski (1988) indicated that student interest and choice should be included in every elementary classroom. Mrs. IC reported on the researcher-generated Reading Survey that she thought all third through fifth grade teachers should allow reading for pleasure 1%-5% of the of the block time each nine weeks. (see Table 1, p. 61). Mrs. Third and Ms. Fourth indicated that there was virtually no time during their reading/English/language arts block to allow students time to read for pleasured. All three teachers agreed that on test day, when a

student finished the reading test, he/she read a book for pleasure. Mrs. Third stated 1%-5% (see Table 2, p. 62), Ms. Fourth checked 1%-5% (see Table 3, pp. 62-63), and Mrs. Fifth related 35%-50% (see Table 4, p. 63). Observations by the researcher agreed with Mrs. Third and Ms. Fourth, but did not agree with Mrs. Fifth's perception. In her classroom, students only read freely when they had finished an assignment or test. Students in all three classes had free choice whenever they went to the reading area. All students in the school know that when they have finished with their work, they are to read. Third and fourth graders go to the school library once a week for 45 minutes. During this time the librarian teaches a lesson that correlates with the reading story and the students check-out books. Extra times can be arranged with the librarian for research projects. Fifth graders go to the school library once a week for 15 minutes only to check-out books.

All of the students in River City Elementary Magnet participate in the Accelerated Reader program (AR). Accelerated Reader is a software program used for monitoring the practice of reading. Students read books independently (K-1 with help) and then take a computer quiz on each book. Each book is worth points and has been assigned a reading level. Each grade level decides on the number of AR points or the number of AR books that are required for the nine weeks or year. Third grade teachers chose 12 points per nine weeks with no specific grade level minimum. Fourth grade teachers chose 36 points per nine weeks and no books below a 3.6 grade level would count towards this goal. Fifth grade teachers chose 25 points per nine weeks and no books below 4.5 grade level would count towards this goal. Within the Accelerated Reader program is the STAR test which

is a computer adaptive test designed to identify a student's grade-equivalent reading level and instructional level. All students take this test at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. Third and fifth grade require a reading log Monday through Thursday nights. This is signed by the parents/guardians. Third grade requires 10 minutes a night and fifth grade requires 15 minutes a night. This is counted as a weekly grade in reading. Fourth requires 15 minutes a night Monday through Thursday nights. The log is also signed by the parents/guardians and counts as a weekly grade in reading.

Provide Students with a Wide Variety of Literature and Genres

According to Ouzts et al. (2003) elementary teachers need a broad knowledge of children's literature and children's authors. Hickman (1981) indicated that students will be more interested in reading if teachers allow self-selection, present literature daily, establish attractive reading centers, and provide literature-related activities. Besides presenting the reading story, none of the teachers presented any other literature daily. Once a nine weeks, Mrs. Fifth reads a book aloud that is related to a topic in social studies. Once a nine weeks, every grade is required to read a trade book and provide literature-related activities. The book is chosen by the teachers. Ms. Fourth expressed the impact of a trade book on her life:

> While in the fourth grade, my teacher read Where the Red Fern Grows (Rawls, 1961) aloud to the class. I have never forgotten how engaging the book was and how much the class looked forward to hearing him read. I have read that book to one of my classes, and have chosen other titles different years. I find that the students look forward to my read-alouds as much as I did when I was their age. I try to choose titles that are above their independent reading levels and/or titles they might not choose on their own. In addition to providing an enjoyable activity and introducing students to new vocabulary and skills, this practice also models fluent, expressive reading. (Ms. Fourth, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

Of the three teachers, Ms. Fourth was the only teacher with an actual reading center and it was very attractive. She also had posters from other subjects on the walls such as social studies, prefix/suffix/roots, the six traits of writing, punctuation, the writing process, and editor's marks. Mrs. Third only had math posters on the walls and bulletin boards besides the one with students' work. Mrs. Fifth had social studies, research skills, writing process, and figurative language posters on the walls. All three teachers provided literature-related activities with the story for the week. Usually one was a writing/journal activity. Others were puzzles, games, and art activities such as drawing a favorite scene from the book or a character. Ms. Fourth and Mrs. Fifth had the widest variety of literature due in part to the sheer number of books/magazines/resource books that were available.

Build, Link, and Expand Using Multiple Texts

Pressley (1999) indicates that students use prior knowledge for a variety of purposes during reading. Fisher and Fry (2009) stated that the demand placed on background knowledge accelerates as students progress through the grade levels. Students are required to apply previously learned concepts in new ways. There are several strategies that a teacher can learn to help build background knowledge. Duke (2003) suggested using informational texts. All three teachers used informational texts during the weekly reads. Miller (2002) recommended the use of graphic organizers to compare texts to the student's own experiences and compare to what is happening in the world. Again, all three teachers used graphic organizers and discussed them at length.

According to Moustafa (2008), having the teacher read aloud on a variety of topics also expands background knowledge. Only Mrs. Fifth read aloud any material that

was related to other topics. She read aloud books on topics in social studies and used a weekly *Time* student magazine to further introduce and discuss other topics. Mrs. Fifth discussed genres:

> I try to use anything that will enhance the lesson and help students read something nonfiction. Students aren't use to this and, at first, have difficulty with retaining the
> concepts, but once they have had practice at it, they see that it can be just as fun on
> fiction by only adding facts which they love to try to one-up each other with. At least once a nine weeks, I require students to bring a newspaper article related to a certain topic and we read and discuss those. The students begin to see how much of everyday life is spent reading something. (Mrs. Fifth, personal interview, April 2, 2015).

All three teachers used library books on selected topics to enhance students' learning. Sometimes a portion of the books was read or it was displayed for the students to read.

Emphasize Community and Collaboration for Learning

Bogner et al. (2002) concluded that many effective teachers use socially interactive structures to enhance learning. Topping and Ferguson (2005) indicated that effective classrooms is characterized by ongoing, deep discussions between students and teachers. There is high interactivity between teacher and students and among students and students. Collaborative learning involves students working together in small groups to help each other understand the material presented. The classroom becomes a community of learners where everyone works collaboratively and cooperatively.

Mrs. Third indicated on the researcher-made Reading Survey that she used small groups and buddy partners approximately 35%-50% of the block time each nine weeks. This was evidenced in the observations of her teaching reading. She usually used large group only to teach the concepts and then used centers to practice the concepts. Students would help each other and would work on projects and worksheets cooperatively and

collaboratively. The students nor the teacher had deep discussions about reading stories, however, the stories were discussed within centers. Mrs. Third always asked the students for input about the story after the assessment.

On the Reading Survey, Ms. Fourth checked that she used small groups 20%-35% of the block time each nine weeks and partnered with a buddy 6%-10% of the block time each nine weeks. Ms. Fourth stated, "I try to have cooperative groups three times a week, but it does not always work out, so sometimes it is only two times." (Ms. Fourth, personal interview, April 2, 2015). During the observations, students did work in small groups and cooperatively. Twice the students were asked to discuss the stories concerning the author's purpose and how did that fit into everyday life. Ms. Fourth reported:

> I model a love for reading by reading aloud to the students and sharing my excitement over new books that they might not otherwise be exposed to. Students are further encouraged to share their opinions about various titles on an interactive poster in the classroom. I will display a copy of a popular book cover and students can share their reviews of the title on post-it notes as a method of recommending books to their classmates. (Ms. Fourth, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

Mrs. Fifth indicated that she used small groups more than 50% of the block time each nine weeks and buddy partners were used approximately 20%-35% of the time (Mrs. Fifth, personal interview, April 2, 2015). During observations, students turned towards a neighbor from three to four times during the reading block. Students only worked in small groups to complete workbook pages. Discussions of the reading stories were communicated during large group with Mrs. Fifth guiding the discussions.

Balance Teacher-Led Activities and Discussions with Student-Led Activities and Discussions

According to Larson (2000), students in classrooms that hold teacher-led discussions are active participants in constructing their knowledge rather than passive listeners who only receive information taught by the teacher. The teacher's job is to start

the discussions by asking questions, maintaining the discussion, and finally summarizing and wrapping up the discussion. The students should be the main one discussing. Mercer (1995) proposed that in student-led discussions, students actively seek each other's ideas and engage critically with each other's ideas. The teacher becomes more of a facilitator than a leader. All three teachers used more teacher-led discussions than student led. Mrs. Fifth was the only teacher where students initiated questions for discussion. Several students would answer, but there was not a deep discussion.

Use Technology that Expands and Links Concepts

Papert (1980) suggested that students use computers for their writing assignments and at the end of the year, create a book out of their collection. McKenna (1998) indicated that listening to an electronic version of a story or book could help expand vocabulary, increase knowledge of words, and help develop a sense of story. McKenna et al. (2003) found that the use of technology involved students in a much richer socially interactive environment. Mrs. IC checked on the survey that third through fifth grade students should use the computers only 6%-10% of the block time each nine weeks. (see Table 1, p. 61)

Mrs. Third indicated on the survey that the students used computers only 1%-5% of the block time each nine weeks (see Table 2, p. 62). Students had an option to use computers in the spelling center. They also often used a computer to look up the level of a book they were interested in reading. Mrs. Third stated the following about technology:

> I believe technology should be integrated into every day teaching. Using technology puts so many resources at the fingertips of your students. It also promotes student choice and student differentiation. You are also making them more productive in our "plugged in" society we live in. (Mrs. Third, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

Mrs. Third uses a behavior reward program called Class Dojo. Class Dojo is a classroom tool that helps teachers save time, boost classroom engagement, and improves student behavior quickly and easily, with no painful data entry. Class Dojo also lets teachers communicate student progress with parents and students. Whenever Mrs. Third saw a student using appropriate behaviors, such as staying on topic, discussing quietly in group, helping another student, and so on, she would tell the student to "Go Dojo." The student would go to the computer and find their name and click on one point. At the end of the week, the points are totaled, and students can "buy" items from a list that the class comprised of things to be used for reinforcement. Mrs. Third has four computers in the classroom. One is always running Dojo, so that leaves three for the students to use. Mrs. Third has a laptop at her desk for her own use.

Ms. Fourth stated that computers were used approximately 6%-10% of the block time each nine weeks (see Table 3, pp. 62-63). Computers are used for one of the reading centers, using the Moby Max program. Moby Reading pairs literature and informational texts with similar topics to encourage deep reading and facilitate learning. Each text in Moby Reading is accompanied by a series of standards-aligned comprehension questions. These questions allow teachers to monitor progress on the CCSS and ensure that students are comprehending and actively engaged with the texts they are reading. Each grade has three reading levels with 10 lessons at each level. Each lesson has at least one literature text and two informational texts. To ensure that the student is working at an independent level, the reading level adjusts if the comprehension questions are too difficult. There are four computers in the classroom for the students to use. Ms. Fourth has a laptop on her

desk for her own use. She also used a document camera and an interactive whiteboard almost every day. Ms. Fourth voiced her concern about technology:

> While I appreciate the proliferation of educational websites, our access to technology, while improving, is still rather limited. It is very frustrating to find out about awesome instructional websites and not have a way to really allow time for all students to use them. (Ms. Fourth, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

Mrs. Fifth also indicated that computers were used 1%-5% of the block time each nine weeks (see Table 4, p. 63). There are four computers in her classroom. One is reserved for the teacher. Students only used computers to look up the grade level of books they were interested in. Mrs. Fifth used a document camera to check workbook pages and daily language.

Use a Variety of Relevant Assessments

According to Farr (1992), assessment information is supposed to be used to help with curriculum planning. For reading, all three teachers used the weekly reading tests provided by the publisher, Accelerated Reader quizzes, STAR testing, DIBELS testing, and Mid-Year Benchmark Testing. There were no grades taken for STAR testing, DIBELS testing, and Mid-Year Benchmark Testing. Vocabulary was tested with Wordly Wise Wordly Wise 3000 3rd Edition by Educators Publishing Service (Hodkinson & Adams, 2012) for fourth grade and Vocabulary Workshop by Sadlier-Oxford (Sadlier, 2011) for fifth grade. PARCC testing has been completed but the results are not available yet. The teachers used the input from each assessment to adjust the speed of teaching,decide what skill(s) needed to be retaught, and as a guideline for the development of students' reading abilities. DIBELS and Mid-Year Benchmark Testing are the only two required by the parish school board. The remaining tests are what the teachers of River City Elementary Magnet have decided upon for assessing students'

reading ability. Mrs. Third commented about the variety of assessments by saying, “A variety of assessments should be used in evaluating students. All kids learn in various ways. If they learn differently from other students, then we should assess them with the same approach.” (Mrs. Third, personal interview, April 2, 2015). Ms. Fourth stated, “I’m not opposed to standardized testing, but there needs to be MUCH more clarity on which assessments will be given when and why. The process could also use some major streamlining.” (Ms. Fourth, personal interview, April 2, 2015).

Teachers’ Perceptions of Evidence-based Practices

Vaughn and Sherman (2010) found that only three out of thirty participants (practicing principals, assistant principals, and instructional coordinators at the elementary, middle, and high school level) in their study used the concept “best practices” in their response to the question, “How much time during the school day do you spend working with teachers training them in best practices in curriculum?” The other 27 used the terms “instruction”, “curriculum”, or “strategies” to define best practices or evidence-based practices.

All three teachers at River City Elementary Magnet were asked the following question: Experts in the field of literacy instruction have generally accepted ten evidence-based practices for teaching reading. Some educators call them Best Practices and others call them Research-based Practices. What Evidence-based Practices are you aware of?

Looking at Table 5, Mrs. Third stated that she knew that students should be working in large group, small groups, one-on-one, and in pairs. She said that, “Teachers must activate prior knowledge before they can add-on to that base of knowledge. My

students love to tell me what they know about a subject before I teach it." (Mrs. Third, personal interview, April 2, 2015). Mrs. Third also declared that she thought fluency was an evidence-based practice since there had been such a big push for it and the use of DIBELS. The use of practice pages was also mentioned by Mrs. Third as an evidence-based practice.

Mrs. Fourth verbalized that the use of data/performance on assessments to drive future instruction was an evidence-based practice. She also noted using a variety of assessments and writing about reading were evidence based practices. Small group instruction and connecting texts to self, world, and other texts were also mentioned by Ms. Fourth as evidence-based practices. (Ms. Fourth, personal interview, April 2, 1015)

Mrs. Fifth reported that phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing were evidence-based practices. She also indicated that reading aloud by the teacher and out loud by the students was an important part of teaching reading. (Mrs. Fifth, personal interview, April 2, 2015). All three teachers said that having books available and having a wide variety of books was important.

When Mrs. IC was interviewed, she indicated knowledge of the following evidence-based practices: using informational texts, using informational texts to write, using texts to compare and contrast, and vocabulary building using context clues. She ranked vocabulary building as the most important practice at all grade levels, followed by reading informational texts, using informational texts to write, and lastly using text to compare and contrast. (Mrs. IC, personal interview, April 9, 2015)

Table 5
Subcategories of 10 Evidence-Based Practices in Reading and Teacher Identified as an Evidence-based Practice

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE	TEACHERS		
SUBCATEGORY	THIRD	FOURTH	FIFTH
Classroom that Motivates			
Easy Access			
Wide Assortment of Texts	X	X	X
Small Groups	X	X	
Design of Room			
7 Books per Child			
500 Books			
Organization of Books			
Preview Books			
Display of Students' Work			
Whole Group	X		
Buddy Partners		X	
Independent Work			
Teach for Everyday Purposes	X	X	
Five Components of Reading			
Phonemic Awareness			X
Phonics			X
Vocabulary			X
Fluency	X		X
Comprehension			X
Time for Independent Reading			
Self-select Books			
Pleasure Reading			
Wide Variety of Literature	X	X	X
Multiple Texts			
Community & Collaboration			
Balance Teacher & Student Discussions			
Technology			
Assessment Variety		X	

It is evident from the interviews and the Reading Survey that although these teachers and the instructional coordinator are excellent educators, they do not necessarily have a working definition of evidence-based practices in reading. They know how they are expected to be teaching, but when asked why, Mrs. Fifth responded, "I teach the way that I do because that is the way I learned to teach while I was student teaching." (Mrs. Fifth, personal interview, April 2, 2015) Mrs. Third said, "I learned how to teach while student teaching, and then have added new instructional strategies from workshops, conferences, and in-services." (Mrs. Third, personal interview, April 2, 2015) Ms. Fourth stated:

> When I went back to get my teaching certificate, I was one of the older students in the classes. I had already worked in another field and had some skills that are used in all situations. I would constantly ask the instructors to give me examples so that I would be the best teacher. When you are 21 and getting your first degree, you just want to get it finished. Being older, I wanted to get it right! During student teaching,
> whenever I had a break, I would go to other classrooms and observe other teachers and add to my knowledge of classroom skills. I was lucky in my student teaching to have a principal and a teacher who would also allow me to observe reading in other classrooms during my reading time so that I could have a well-rounded experience. Over time and working with different teachers, I have added to my toolbox to try to make reading a fun yet learning experience for my students. (Ms. Fourth, personal interview, April 2, 2015)

There appears to be the same confusion with these educators as those in the Vaughn and Sherman study (2010), that is, the confusion in terms: evidence-based practices, research-based practices, best practices, curriculum, strategies, instruction, methods, procedures, and directions. Northwest Parish has provided, in the past, two mandatory in-services on Best Practices in Teaching. Each time, the material was presented the one time and with no discussions or small groups but a great deal of watching short videos demonstrating the Best Practices. Either the educators in this study did not attend the training or did not

understand that those Best Practices in Teaching were mandated by No Child Left Behind and as such had to be used in the classrooms. It is clear that Northwest Parish has not followed-up and made clear the use of these practices.

It is noted in Table 6 that although the three teachers did not exactly indicate the Evidence-based Practices, they all knew subcategories of the Practices such as small groups, technology, and classroom library. There were subcategories in which a teacher did not participate, such as displaying students' work and fluency. The suggestion of previewing books was not practiced by any of the teachers. Balanced teacher and student discussions was a weak area for all three teachers as was reading for pleasure. The teachers did teach evidence-based practices approximately 95% of the teaching time, however, they were not aware that all of the practices they used were evidenced -based. However, it must be noted that what is ultimately important is that the teachers used the practices, not that they necessarily could or could not name them.

Table 7 combines what the instructional coordinator checked (C) on the Reading Survey, with what the third grade teacher checked (3), fourth grade teacher (4) and fifth grade teacher (5).

Summary

Chapter Four began with a discussion of the procedures used in this study. A magnet school in Northwest Parish in Louisiana was selected. The principal granted permission for the study to be conducted at her school. The instructional coordinator and three upper elementary teachers, one per grade, agreed to participate in the study.

Table 6
Subcategories of 10 Evidence-based Practices in Reading and Teacher Usage Based on Observations

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE	TEACHERS		
SUBCATEGORY	THIRD	FOURTH	FIFTH
Classroom that Motivates			
Easy Access	X	X	X
Wide Assortment of Texts	X	X	X
Small Groups	X	X	X
Design of Room	X	X	X
7 Books per Child	X	X	X
500 Books	--	X	X
Organization of Books	--	X	--
Preview Books	--	--	--
Display of Students' Work	X	X	--
Whole Group	X	X	X
Buddy Partners	X	X	X
Independent Work	X	X	X
Teach for Everyday Purposes	X	X	X
Five Components of Reading			
Phonemic Awareness	--	--	--
Phonics	--	--	--
Vocabulary	X	X	X
Fluency	--	--	X
Comprehension	X	X	X
Time for Independent Reading			
Self-select Books	X	X	X
Pleasure Reading	--	--	--
Wide Variety of Literature	X	X	X
Multiple Texts	X	X	X
Community & Collaboration	X	X	X
Balance Teacher & Student Discussions	--	--	--
Technology	X	X	X
Assessment Variety	X	X	X

Table 7
A Comparison of the Use of Evidence-based Practices for Nine Weeks According to Reading Survey

	Amount of Time Spent Per Nine Weeks					
HOW MUCH TIME A WEEK DO YOU USE THE FOLLOWING IN READING	1-5%	6-10%	10-20%	20-35%	35-50%	More than 50%
1. Whole class instruction				C, 3	4	5
2. Small groups				4, 5	C, 3	
3. Independent work			C, 4	3	5	
4. One-on-one help from teacher	3, 4, 5		C			
5. Buddy partner		4	C	5	3	
6. Computers	3, 5	C, 4				
7. Discuss in small groups/pairs recently read book		C, 4			3, 5	
8. Read for pleasure	C, 3, 4				5	

Note. C=Mrs. IC, 3=Mrs. Third, 4=Ms. Fourth, 5=Mrs. Fifth

Data collected included information gathered from both formal and informal interviews, classroom observations for ten reading/English/Language arts block periods of 105 minutes each per teacher, and a Reading Survey designed by the researcher. Each of the ten research-based practices in reading were discussed along with the information that the teachers provided on the survey, through the observations, and the interviews.

The first research question is: What do the third-fifth grade teachers in an elementary magnet school indicate are evidence-based practices in literary instruction? The three teachers were able to give subcategories of the practices, but no one teacher was able to identify all ten of the practices. For example, a teacher could state the subcategory of Wide Assortment of Texts, but not state the overall category of Classroom that Motivates. One reason was the lack of a stringent definition of “evidence-based”

practices and another reason may be the lack of importance placed on these practices from the superintendent on down.

The second question is: Do these same teachers use these indicated practices in the teaching of reading? The answer is yes for all three teachers. All of the practices were used by the teachers, but in varying degrees ranging from 1% to more than 50% of the time used for reading. There were several subcategories that a teacher did not use, all three did not use, and/or as a whole the three teachers were weak in using that practice. However, it was concluded by the researcher that using the practices was far more important than being able to name the practices.

CHAPTER 5

"Reading is the sole means by which we slip, involuntarily, often helplessly, into another's skin, another's voice, another's soul."--Joyce Carol Oates (1937-) is an American novelist, literary critic, professor, and editor.

Conclusions, Limitations, and Implications for Future Research

Conclusions

This case study examined how closely upper elementary magnet school reading teachers perceptions of evidence-based practices in reading compared to actual practices in their classrooms by the use of teacher interviews, a researcher created reading survey, and teacher observations during reading instruction. The first question asked was, "What do the third-fifth grade teachers in an elementary magnet school indicate are evidence-based practices in literacy instruction?" As indicated in Table 5 (see p 88), the teachers could name subcategories of the practices but not the actual evidence-based practices themselves except for two teachers stating "Teach for Everyday Purposes", one of the teachers indicated a "Variety of Assessments", and all three indicated using a "Wide Variety of Literature" when teaching.

One of the main reasons for the teachers not being able to identify evidence-based practices is the lack of a streamlined definition of evidence-based practices. Are strategies, instruction, evidence-based practices, best practices, curriculum, methods, research-based practices, and procedures all referring to the same idea? If so, then educators need to be made aware of this. If not, what is the difference between all of these terms? These three teachers were confused when the researcher discussed with them the ten evidence-based practices used in this study. The ensuing discussion could

have gone on forever, however, the teachers left with the, “Let us know if there is or is not a difference.”

Some of the subcategories such as books per child, organization of books, preview of books, and easy access to books were not seen by the teachers as an evidence-based practice. Ms. Fourth stated, “What has that got to do with teaching reading? That is just good teaching environment and everyone should be doing that, but to call it a ‘practice’ makes no sense.” (Ms. Fourth, personal interview, April 22, 2015)

All three teachers also indicated that reading for pleasure is not what they would consider a “practice in teaching reading.” Mrs. Fifth indicated that there was too much material to cover and not enough time as it is so to allow time for students to read for pleasure and reading for pleasure should not be an evidence-based practice. “Students have all the time to read at home and on weekends and holidays. I just can’t afford to give them time in the classroom also; not with all I have to teach,” noted Mrs. Fifth. (Mrs. Fifth, personal interview, April 22, 2015) Mrs. Third said, “What do I as a teacher have to do with reading for pleasure? I cannot monitor ‘reading for pleasure.’ Everything we do has to be measureable and I don’t see how that is measureable.” (Mrs. Third, personal interview, April 22, 2015) Ms. Fourth expressed:

> How is this a best practice? Obviously the person or persons who came up with this have not been in a classroom recently or they would see that there is no time for this. The only time is when a student has finished a test and we are waiting on the others, but to have *everyone* in the class stop and read for enjoyment…..it just isn’t
> going to happen. Teachers are pushed to the limits as it is and to add time to read for enjoyment is not possible, at least not in my classroom. (Ms. Fourth, personal interview, April 22, 2015)

Again, all three teachers said that they just assumed some of the things that they did in the classroom were what all "good teachers" did; they were not necessarily evidence-based. Mrs. Third indicated:

> We have no choice in all of the assessments we give. Some are mandated by the parish, some by the state, and, I guess, some by the federal government. So, by default, we do give a variety of assessments, but only because we have to. (Mrs. Third, personal interview, April 22, 2015)

All three teachers agreed that they wish that they could use technology more. However, as

Mrs. Fifth noted:

> We are all limited in the number of computers in our classrooms. It would be great if we had enough so that every student could use one, but as it is, a teacher can only have three to four students at a time on the desktops. We (the school) do have a rolling cart with 30 laptops, however, we have to sign up to use it. It is a matter of sitting down, planning the reading lesson, and then researching interesting ways to use it to enhance the lessons. Then signing up for the cart, then taking the students through the lesson with everyone being on the same screen at the same time. This takes a lot of planning and we as teachers have so much on our plate already that it just seems like one more thing to add on and it gets put to the bottom of the list. (Mrs. Fifth, personal interview, April 22, 2015)

All three teachers agreed that giving students more of a lead in classroom discussions was scary and all three thought that the students were not mature enough at this age to be able to form the higher-level questions and then maintain the discussion. Ms. Fourth expressed:

> If we start students with this type of higher level questioning in kindergarten and continue every year to increase the use of it, students will then routinely know what and how to ask these type of questions and keep the discussion going without everyone trying to out talk everyone else. Right now, my students have a tough enough time just answering the higher-order questions that I ask. (Ms. Fourth, personal interview, April 22, 2015)

Again, displaying student work, independent work, community and collaboration, and multiple texts were seen by the teachers as what is expected for all teachers to do. It is just a "natural occurrence" that all teachers are taught to do during student teaching. To single them out an evidence-based practice was clearly not understood.

It is evident, from the comments made by the three teachers and the confusion surrounding evidence-based practices, that educators need more training in identifying evidence-based practices. This problem needs to be taken more seriously by school districts and emphasized in staff development. The once or twice a year observations by an administrator will not give the administrator a total picture of what is occurring in that classroom on a daily basis. Since these practices are mandated, all educators must be aware of what they are and what they look like in a classroom. When teachers move towards using evidence-based practices, they create new, more meaningful forms of assessment,

evaluating, grading, teaching, learning, thinking, and teaching reading becomes a set of more meaningful skills that students come to enjoy. With that enjoyment comes pleasure to the teacher.

The second research questions was, "Do these same teachers use the indicated practices in their teaching of reading?" The answer is a resounding, "Yes!" Table 7 (see p. 92) shows the ten evidence-based practices and the subcategories and whether or not the teachers used them during reading instruction. The only practice of the ten that no one used was "Balanced Teacher and Student Discussions." The reasons why were discussed on page 95. Everyone used "Variety of Assessments," "Community & Collaboration," "Multiple Texts," "Wide Variety of Literature," and "Teaching for

Everyday Purpose." All but one teacher used "Technology." When the subcategories are looked at, no one used "Reading for Pleasure," "Phonics," "Phonemic Awareness," and "Preview Books." Even though these teachers could only identify one of the ten evidence-based practices (Wide Variety of Literature), they were certainly able to use these practices in the classrooms. One reason may be that they saw these practices as being a "good" teacher, practices that every teacher should use every day. To them, these practices were just "normal, everyday teaching" and thus not noted as something exemplary. Is there room for improvement? Again, "Yes!" Even though most of the practices were observed, not one of the three teachers used all ten of the best practices. All three of the teachers said that there was room for improvement and, in fact, they could not wait to "preview books" with their students. The school librarian stated that she is now going to incorporate this into her library time with each grade so it will hook students into reading. The teachers wanted a

copy of Table 7 so that they could work on their weaknesses and said that they thought the researcher should present these findings to the faculty. As Mrs. Fifth said, "If we don't know these practices, what do you bet that the others don't either!" (Mrs. Fifth, personal interview, April 22, 2015)

Limitations

Some critics may consider a limitation as it relates to the narrow scope of the study in which data was gathered from only a magnet school and from only three teachers in the upper grades. A study that encompassed at least first through fifth grades, added a regular neighborhood school, and added more teachers might more effectively reveal whether or not teachers know evidence-based practices and if are they used across all

grades. With such a small population, there is little ability to generalize to a wider population. Increasing the number of participants would provide the researcher with a broader spectrum of techniques and practices used to teach reading in the elementary classroom.

Another limitation was not giving the teachers a definition of evidence-based reading practices. Participants may have had a better understanding of survey items and subsequent interviews had a definition of evidence-based practices been given. Giving them at least one definition of evidence-based practices might enlighten the teachers as to what they are doing in the classroom that is evidence-based.

Also, it would also be difficult to replicate this study. This appears to be a major limitation to most case studies.

Another limitation was that the researcher, alone, coded the observations, interviews, and survey. A partner should have been added to give further credence to the data.

Implications for Future Research

Continued investigation into the knowledge and use of evidence-based practices in reading may offer additional insights into the identification of these practices and the development of further practices. By expanding this research to include regular education schools and more teachers, trends and beliefs might emerge that would help all teachers of reading.

However, before any other research should be conducted, a highly specific definition of evidence-based practices must be made and agreed on by the majority of

educators. Only then can we sift through what is being observed and refer to it by the correct terminology.

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APPENDIX A
REQUEST TO CONDUCT STUDY

Rhonda Cross
Address

Principal, Teacher, Instructional Coordinator
River City Elementary Magnet
Address

Dear :

I am currently a doctoral candidate in the area of curriculum and instruction at Louisiana State University. Presently, I am in the process of working on my dissertation. In order to complete this document, it is necessary that I conduct a research study.

Please accept this letter as my request for permission to conduct a study on the third-fifth grade magnet teachers' perceptions of best practices in teaching reading and the actual reading instruction in third-fifth grade magnet classrooms. There will be interviews with the instructional coordinator and three teachers plus one questionnaire for them to fill out. The will also be observed in the classroom teaching reading a total of ten class periods. The identity of all participants will remain anonymous and all information collected will be kept confidential.

Every effort will be made to minimize disruption to the educational process and to maintain the ethical principals of the study and the University's Institutional Review Board.

I appreciate your consideration of my request and would be happy to talk with you if you have any questions or need additional.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Cross, Ed.S.

APPENDIX B
PERMISSION FORM ATTACHMENT

Project Title: **An exploration of how closely upper elementary magnet school reading teachers' perceptions of evidenced-based reading practices compare to actual practices in their classrooms**

Performance Site: **River City Elementary Magnet**

Investigator: **The following investigator is available for questions M-F 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**
Rhonda Cross, Doctoral Candidate
Department of Education, LSU
(281) 309-1290

Purpose of Study: **The purpose of this research project is to find out:**
(1) What do the third-fifth grade teachers in a magnet elementary school indicate are the evidenced-based practices in reading instruction?
(2) Do these same teachers use any or the indicated practices in their teaching of reading?

Inclusion Criteria: **one third grade teacher, one fourth grade teacher, one fifth grade teacher, one instructional coordinator**

Exclusion Criteria: **two other third grade teachers, two other fourth grade teachers, two other fifth grade teachers**

Description of Study: **Over a period of two weeks, the investigator will observe teachers in their reading classrooms each day. A check list will be used concerning evidenced-based practices. Each teacher will also be interviewed along with the instructional coordinator by the investigator**

Benefits: **Teachers and the instructional coordinator will have the opportunity to express their opinions about reading instructional activities.**

Risks: **There are no known risks.**

Right to Refuse: **Participation is voluntary. At any time, a participate may voluntarily leave the study,**

Privacy: **Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included for publication.**

Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

Financial Information: **There is no cost for participation in the study nor is there any compensation to the subjects for participation.**

Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subject's rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Chairman, Institution Review Board, (225) 578-8692. I will participate in the study above and recognize the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

_____ _____

Signature **Date**

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL COORDINATOR

1. In the area of reading, what evidenced-based practices are you aware of?

2. How would you rank them in importance in grades 3-5?

	Amount of Time Spent Per Nine Weeks					
HOW MUCH TIME A WEEK SHOULD A 3-5 TEACHER USE THE FOLLOWING IN READING	1-5%	6-10%	10-20%	20-35%	35-50%	More than 50%
1. Whole class instruction						
2. Small groups						
3. Independent work						
4. One-on-one help from teacher						
5. Buddy partner						
6. Computers						
7. Discuss in small groups/pairs recently read book						
8. Read for pleasure						

3. Is there anything you wish to tell me about reading instruction in your school?

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

1. What is your degree in?
2. How long have you been a teacher?
3. Have you taught at any other schools?
4. Do you have anything you would like to say about teaching in general?
5. Experts in the field of literacy instruction have generally accepted ten Evidence-based Practices for teaching reading. Some educators call them Best Practices, and other Research-based Practices. What Evidence-based Practices are you aware of? Please elaborate.

APPENDIX E
READING SURVEY

	Amount of Time Spent Per Nine Weeks					
HOW MUCH TIME A WEEK DO YOU USE THE FOLLOWING IN READING	1-5%	6-10%	10-20%	20-35%	35-50%	More than 50%
1. Whole class instruction						
2. Small groups						
3. Independent work						
4. One-on-one help from teacher						
5. Buddy partner						
6. Computers						
7. Discuss in small groups/pairs recently read book						
8. Read for pleasure						

APPENDIX F
TEACHERS OBSERVATIONS

	DAYS									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
CLASSROOM										
Display of student's work										
Classroom library organized										
Classroom library of 160+										
Classroom library of f & nf										
Classroom library on & below										
Display books w book covers										
Preview of books										
READING FOR EVERYDAY										
Authentic texts										
FIVE COMPONENTS										
Phonemic awareness										
Phonics										
Vocabulary										
Fluency										
Comprehension										

	DAYS									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
INDEPENDENT READING										
10% = 9 min.										
20% = 18 min.										
30% = 27 min.										
40% = 36 min.										
50% = 45 min.										
>50%										
Self Selection										
LITERATURE VARIETY										
Literature Presented										
Attractive Reading Centers										
Wide Variety										
Genres										
Informational Texts										
MULTIPLE TEXTS										
Prior Knowledge										
Visual/Graphic Organizers										
Student Read Aloud										
Teacher Read Aloud										
Thematic Unit										
Multiple texts										

	DAYS									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
LEARNING										
Student/student interaction										
Student/Teacher interaction										
Large Group instruction										
Small Group Instruction										
Pairs Instruction										
Individual Instruction										
Oral Reading										
Feedback										
Anecdotes										
Share and Evaluate Literature										
ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION										
Teacher-led discussions										
Student-led discussions										
TECHNOLOGY										
Use of Computer by students other than AR										

APPENDIX G
IRB REVIEW APPROVAL

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST

Institutional Review Boa

Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair 130 David Boy
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

TO:
Rhonda Cross
Education

FROM:
Dennis Landin
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE:
March 25, 2015

RE:
IRB# E9259

TITLE:
An exploration of how closely upper elementary magnet school reading teachers' perceptions of evidenced-based reading practices compare to actual practices in their classrooms

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: New Protocol

Review Date: 3/24/2015

Approved X **Disapproved**

Approval Date: 3/24/2015 **Approval Expiration Date:** 3/23/2018

Exemption Category/Paragraph: 1; 2a

Signed Consent Waived?: No

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable)

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING – Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE:**

**All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsu.edu/irb*

VITA

Rhonda Cross has been a teacher and school psychologist for 25 years in Caddo Parish. She has also taught courses on gifted education and handicapped students education at Louisiana State University in Shreveport, Louisiana. She is currently teaching fifth grade science to 75 students and fifth grade reading/English/language arts to 25 students at Fairfield Elementary Magnet School in Shreveport, Louisiana.

Rhonda received her Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology and religion from Baylor University in Waco, Texas in 1972. In 1976, she earned her Master of Arts in Psychology from Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. Beginning in 1993, Rhonda attended Louisiana Technical University in Monroe, Louisiana; University of New Orleans in New Orleans, Louisiana; Centenary College of Louisiana in Shreveport, Louisiana; Louisiana State University in Shreveport, Louisiana; and Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and earned 125+ graduate hours. From 1976 through 1994, Rhonda was a School Psychologist for Caddo Parish schools in Shreveport, Louisiana. While on maternity leave, Rhonda began substitute teaching at her son's school and decided to go back to school to earn a teaching certificate. Rhonda earned her teaching certification through the alternative teacher educational program at Centenary College of Louisiana in Shreveport, Louisiana in 1994. She immediately began teaching reading/English/language arts to fourth grade gifted students at South Highlands Elementary Magnet in Shreveport, Louisiana. Rhonda continued to take classes to earn her Gifted Certification through Louisiana State University in Shreveport, Louisiana. She earned the certification in 1997. A Reading Specialist Certification was

received in 2002 followed by Certification in Parish or City School Supervisor of Instruction in 2006. Also in 2006, Rhonda became certified as a Child Search Coordinator. An Education Specialist Certification in Reading was received in 2007 from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Rhonda currently resides in Shreveport, Louisiana with her Chihuahua, Izzy. She has a son, Brandon, living in Houston, Texas and attending the University of Houston and a daughter, Lindsey, living in Dublin, Ohio where she is employed as an attorney. Rhonda loves to read and has over 300 books that she is "going to read." She keeps adding to the piles. She also likes to garden, knit, cross-stitch, cook, travel, and, of course, attend college classes. She hopes to one day collaborate with her daughter on a children's book and also have her son provide the illustrations. She has told all of her students that if they ever publish a book, they must recognize her contributions to their reading and writing process in the dedication page.